

The New Isaac

Tradition and Intertextuality
in the Gospel of Matthew

Leroy A. Huizenga

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By

Leroy A. Huizenga



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Meiner geliebten Frau Kari gewidmet

Ihre Söhne stehen auf und preisen sie, ihr Mann lobt sie:
»Es sind wohl viele tüchtige Frauen, du aber übertriffst sie alle.«

CONTENTS

Foreword	xiii
Preface	xvii
Acknowledgements	xix
Chapter 1. The Fate of the Figure of Isaac in the Gospel of	
Matthew	1
1.1 Traces of Isaac in the Gospel of Matthew	1
1.2 Four Reasons for the Neglect of Isaac in the Gospel	
of Matthew	2
1.2.1 Redaction Criticism and the Neglect of	
Narrative Dynamics	2
1.2.2 The Influence of the MT Canon and the	
Neglect of Extrabiblical Texts and Traditions	9
1.2.3 Debating Definitions and the Dating of the	
Akedah	14
1.2.4 The Lure of the Formula Quotations and the	
Neglect of Matthean Allusions	18
1.3 Summary	20
Chapter 2. The Model Reader, the Encyclopedia and Textual	
Intention	21
2.1 Umberto Eco: Open Works and Model Readers	21
2.2 The Encyclopedia as Cultural Treasury	24
2.2.1 Dictionaries vs. Encyclopedias	24
2.2.2 The Dictionary as Porphyrian Tree	25
2.2.3 The Encyclopedia as Labyrinth	27
2.3 The Model Reader and the Intention of the Text	29
2.3.1 What the Model Reader Is: The Dialectical	
Relationship of Text and Encyclopedia	30
2.3.2 What the Model Reader Does: The Process of	
Reading	33
2.4 Summary	41

Chapter 3. The Model Reader, Intertextuality and Biblical Studies	43
3.1 Introduction to Intertextuality	43
3.2 The Implications of Intertextuality: Politics, Play and Biblical Studies	45
3.2.1 Origins and Political Implications	45
3.2.2 From Politics to Play	49
3.2.3 Criticism of the Use of Intertextuality in Biblical Studies	51
3.3 Eco and Intertextuality	53
3.4 Criteria for Perceiving Intertexts	58
3.4.1 Richard Hays's Criteria and Echoes of Scripture	58
3.4.2 Hays's Criteria Revised: Echoes of Scripture and Tradition	63
3.5 Summary	71
Chapter 4. The Akedah Prior to the Common Era	75
4.1 The Akedah: Debates, Distortions, Definitions and Dating	75
4.2 Gen 22 MT	77
4.3 Gen 22 LXX	79
4.4 2 Chronicles	82
4.5 <i>Jubilees</i>	83
4.6 4Q225 (' <i>Pseudo-Jubilees</i> ^a ')	88
4.6.1 An Active and Willing Isaac	89
4.6.2 Passover/Exodus Connections	91
4.6.3 Soteriological Implications?	92
4.7 Judith	93
4.8 Summary	95
Chapter 5. The Akedah in the First Century of the Common Era	97
5.1 Philo	97
5.1.1 Texts Apart from <i>De Abrahamo</i>	98
5.1.2 <i>De Abrahamo</i>	102
5.2 Pseudo-Philo's <i>Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum</i> (L.A.B.)	104
5.2.1 Dating L.A.B.	104
5.2.2 Balaam's Divine Encounter	106
5.2.3 Deborah's Song	107

5.2.4	Seila's Sacrifice	112
5.2.5	Summary: The Akedah in <i>L.A.B.</i>	114
5.3	4 Maccabees	115
5.3.1	Dating 4 Maccabees	115
5.3.2	The Akedah as Intertextual Resource in 4 Maccabees	117
5.3.3	Summary: The Akedah in 4 Maccabees	122
5.4	Josephus' <i>Antiquities</i>	123
5.5	<i>1 Clement</i>	126
5.6	Summary	127
Chapter 6. The Figure of Isaac in the First Chapter of the Gospel of Matthew		
6.1	Matthean Preliminaries	129
6.2	Matt 1:1: "Son of Abraham"	139
6.3	Matt 1:2–17: The Matthean Genealogy	143
6.4	Matt 1:18–25: The Extraordinary Conceptions of Two Promised Children	144
6.5	Summary	151
Chapter 7. The Baptism of God's Beloved Son		
7.1	Verbal Correspondence: The Intertextual Disposition of the Heavenly Voice	153
7.1.1	Verbal Correspondence between Matt 3:17 and Gen 22:2, 11–12, 15–16	153
7.1.2	The Critical Consensus on the Intertextual Disposition of the Heavenly Voice: Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1	156
7.1.3	The Model Reader's Preliminary Conclusions ...	167
7.2	Thematic Coherence: Echoes of the Akedah Produced by the Allusion	169
7.2.1	Threat, Obedience, Righteousness	169
7.2.2	The Testing Narrative: Obedience and Cross	175
7.2.3	Sacrifice and Soteriology	181
7.3	Summary	185
Chapter 8. The Suffering Servant and Matthean Christology ...		
8.1	Questioning the Significance of the Suffering Servant	189

8.2	The Dearth of the Servant in the Encyclopedia of Early Judaism	190
8.2.1	Literature apart from Isaiah	190
8.2.2	Isaiah: MT, LXX, Targum	192
8.2.3	Summary	197
8.3	Matthean Quotations of Isaianic “Servant” Material: Healing and Gentile Inclusion	198
8.3.1	Matt 8:17 and Isa 53:4a	198
8.3.2	Matt 12:17–21 and Isa 42:1–4	201
8.3.3	Allusions to the Servant?	204
8.3.4	Summary	206
8.4	Summary: ὁ ἀγαπητός μου in Matt 12:18	206
Chapter 9	The Transfiguration of the Beloved Son	209
9.1	The Heavenly Voice as <i>Theologia Crucis</i>	209
9.2	A New Moses?	210
9.2.1	Evaluating the Moses Typology	210
9.2.2	Alternative Possibilities for Potential Mosaic Allusions	212
9.2.3	“Listen to him”: A Prophet like Moses or a Sacrifice like Isaac?	215
9.2.4	Other Possibilities	219
9.2.5	Summary	222
9.3	The Matthean Transfiguration in Intratextual Perspective: Sonship, Obedience, Cross	223
9.4	The Matthean Transfiguration in Intertextual Perspective: The New Isaac	227
9.5	Summary	235
Chapter 10	Endurance unto Death: The Paschal Passion of the Beloved Son	237
10.1	Obedience, Passover and the Akedah	237
10.2	The Passion Narrative and the Obedience of the Matthean Jesus	237
10.3	The Passover Sacrifice of the Beloved Son	240
10.4	Gethsemane and Arrest: The Ultimate Obedience of the Beloved Son	250
10.5	Summary	260

Chapter 11. Conclusions and Reflections on the Gospel of	
Matthew and the Figure of Isaac	263
11.1 Summary: The Figure of Isaac in the First Gospel	263
11.2 Concerns for Further Consideration: Soteriology	
and Temple	268
11.2.1 The Figure of Isaac and the Shape of	
Matthean Soteriology	268
11.2.2 Jesus, Isaac and the Temple	278
Bibliography	293
Index	321

FOREWORD

Some months ago I was asked by the editors of the *Novum Testamentum Supplements Series* to evaluate Leroy Huizenga's proposal. I read the book and recommended its publication in strong terms, for this book is definitely one of the most convincing among the scholarly books investigating biblical intertexts relevant for the interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew. It contributes an important new aspect to Matthean Christology that has been widely neglected among biblical scholars so far: its Isaachian color.

Intertextuality is trendy today. The century-long discussion concerning Old Testament quotations in the New Testament has reached a certain stalemate. All the possible quotations of the Old Testament in the New have been turned upside down so many times that hardly any new results can be expected. In this situation the recent discussion of intertextuality has opened new horizons. The chief impetus came from French philosophy and from reader-response criticism. Scholars have generally abandoned the idea of a text as a closed entity with a clear and unambiguous meaning: Every text is an open text. For Roland Barthes (to give one example), "every text is an intertext, other texts are present in it... texts of the anterior culture and texts of the contemporary culture,"¹ and its readers are the space where the cultural worlds of the past and present resonate. With regard to the century-long discussion about Old Testament quotations in the New, intertextuality provided a totally new perspective and threw doors wide open: The question of *the* biblical background of a New Testament text became a very minor question, or, at least, only one question among many others. All of a sudden it seemed natural and legitimate that hundreds of biblical intertexts would resonate in the minds of biblically literate readers of the New Testament, from their first readers and the church fathers to modern biblical scholars.

Intertextual theory and reader-response criticism make up only one of the currents of Huizenga's work, however. Another current is probably

¹ "Tout texte est un intertexte; autres textes sont présent en lui... les textes de la culture antérieure et ceux de la culture environnante" ("Texte," in *Encyclopaedia Universalis* [30 vols.; Paris: Encyclopaedia Universalis France, 1990], 22:372).

closer to his own intention, namely the new interest in biblical theology that arose primarily in Germany in the sixties of the last century. Naturally, “biblical theologians” were not concerned with the theoretical openness of every text but rather with the specific biblical background of New Testament texts. Biblical theologians of the New Testament realized that the quest for biblical quotations was much too narrow a basis for the illumination of “the biblical soil” of New Testament texts. For beyond the comparatively few explicit biblical quotations, most New Testament texts are full of implicit allusions to biblical texts and motifs. To go even further: Many, if not most, of the New Testament authors were Jews. Their cultural world was not merely the Bible but also the Jewish tradition, or, better, the Bible within the Jewish tradition. Thus, the biblical basis of New Testament texts is greatly enlarged. Discovering the “biblical soil” of most New Testament texts is not only a matter of the biblical texts quoted in the New Testament, but is also a matter of allusions to the Bible, and, even more, the whole of the biblical world in ancient Jewish interpretation.

There is a certain tension between these two currents: The sole interest of a theologian cannot be the mere openness of biblical texts (in spite of the fact that the openness of biblical texts is important), at least not for Huizenga as a biblical theologian. Rather, the primary interest of theologians is the alterity of biblical texts as well as their textual intention. Biblical theologians are interested in limiting the endless number of potential intertexts which may resonate in New Testament texts or in their readers and they are interested in finding those intertexts that lie within the realm of a given text’s intention. As far as biblical intertexts are concerned, sound methodology is required. All “biblical theologians” agree that the Old Testament is *the* mother soil of the New Testament, but confusion reigns when it comes to specifying which biblical texts, motifs or ideas constitute the biblical “mother soil” of this or that specific New Testament text. What “allusions” are intended by the author, what “allusions” might have been discovered by the first readers of a New Testament text or by the church fathers of later centuries, and what “allusions” are the constructions of biblically literate modern scholars? And what about ancient Jewish tradition, which provided the lenses through which both the New Testament authors and their first readers—at least insofar as they were Jewish readers—received their Bible? Huizenga rightly emphasizes the importance of Jewish tradition. “Biblical theology” is a modern construction that presupposes the twofold Biblical canon and that has—at least among

Protestants—a tendency to isolate the canonical books from the Jewish (and later Christian!) tradition. The authors of the New Testament texts and their first Jewish readers were “biblical theologians” of a rather different sort.

With the foregoing I hope to have correctly interpreted the scholarly background of Huizenga’s book. It is the work of a biblical theologian who has broadened the basis of his research into the “intertextual world” of New Testament texts by considering not only their quotations and allusions but also the whole of the Jewish encyclopedia of their authors and first readers. His interests concern the *intentio operis*, the intention of the texts he investigates, or, as I would say it in my words, the alterity of New Testament texts. The field of his research concerns the biblical roots of Matthean Christology. Among the relatively numerous books and articles on similar topics I have encountered recently, Huizenga’s book is one of the most reasonable and methodologically most rewarding. Why? Because it rests on four pillars, all of which are necessary if such a study aims to be more than a lofty construction in a virtual scholarly world.

1. The first pillar: Huizenga bases his investigation on a clearly defined theory of reading and of intertextuality. His basis is Umberto Eco’s theory of the Model Reader and the cultural encyclopedia that the Model Reader actualizes in the process of reading. Huizenga is thus able to bridge the gap between an a-historical literary criticism and the historically given alterity of biblical texts. Huizenga is of course not original when he chooses Eco as his basis—many theological exegetes appreciate Umberto Eco because they want to separate themselves from the ways of radical literary critics on account of the former’s interest in the alterity of the texts with which they work and those texts’ particular intentions. I include myself among the number of those having a special predilection for Eco. In this Huizenga is not original, but he presents his case and his interests in a very clear way.

2. The second pillar: Huizenga has a very clear conception of what an allusion to and what an echo of a biblical text is. His sound bases are the criteria of Richard Hays. But Huizenga makes a reasonable distinction between “allusion” and “echo.” An “allusion” occurs on the level of textual intention. It is intended by the author of the text, at least a model author as he is critically imagined by the modern exegete. An “echo” of the Bible is evoked by an allusion in the first readers, at least

by some of the first historical “model readers” as they are constructed by the modern exegete. Beyond this Huizenga provides other pertinent developments of Richard Hays’s methodological model.

3. The third pillar: Huizenga gives a clear picture of the history of interpretation of Genesis 22 in early Judaism. One of the particular strengths of Huizenga’s interpretation is that he concentrates on more than the Akedah of Isaac in the narrow sense, and thus the ethical aspects of the entire biblical story of Genesis 22, particularly Isaac’s implied obedience, are not overlooked. They are important in early Jewish texts and maybe for “Matthew” as well.

4. Only then does Huizenga begin his reading of Matthew. His close reading of Matthean texts is of course the fourth pillar of his book. He concludes that on the intertextual level Matt 3:13–17, Matt 17:1–8, and probably Matt 1:1 and Matt 12:15–21 allude to Gen 22 or to Isaac in general. This has been severely neglected in recent scholarship. Building upon this basis, readers of the Matthean Gospel will also find echoes of Isaac in other Matthean texts (such as Matt 26:36–56), which possibly intend allusions. In any case the Isaac typology is an important element of Matthean Christology. With this Huizenga does not want to exclude other biblical dimensions of Matthean Christology, in spite of the fact that some of them might be less important than usually thought, e.g. the so-called “Servant of God.”

I think his main thesis is sound. But for me the methodological “model way” of combining his four pillars is Huizenga’s most important contribution to the scholarly discussion. This is the reason why his main hypothesis rests on a solid basis, even if some details might need to be modified here and there. And this is also the reason why I hope that his book will remain in scholarly discussion for a long time.

Ulrich Luz

Laupen, Switzerland, March 2009

PREFACE

This work constitutes my plea for renewed consideration of the relevance of Isaac for Matthean Christology. I contend that when read rightly as a coherent narrative in its first-century setting, with proper attention not only to biblical texts about Isaac but also to extrabiblical traditions about Isaac, the Gospel of Matthew evinces a significant Isaac typology which coheres well with the Matthean themes of Jesus as new temple and ultimate sacrifice. Put more simply, Isaac is *there* in the Gospel of Matthew, although most scholars have overlooked his presence.

Much of this project runs counter to many long-standing commonplaces in Gospel scholarship in terms of assumptions, method and results. Instead of redaction criticism, I employ a form of historically sensitive, disciplined narrative criticism. Instead of Markan priority, I believe the question of synoptic priority fundamentally intractable given the myriad assumptions involved and, in any case, largely irrelevant for a proper narrative reading of the Gospel of Matthew (and for the Gospels of Mark and Luke and perhaps John as well). As regards figures generally thought decisive for Matthean Christology, I find no significant role for the “Suffering Servant” as defined by modern scholarship in Matthean Christology (which is not to say that what we now call Isaianic Servant material was not appropriated prior to the modern period). Neither do I find the evidence for the role of the figure of Moses compelling in many (but not all) Matthean passages in which others have found him (particularly the transfiguration). The consequence of swimming against the stream is that much of what follows involves questioning the assumptions, method and results of prior Gospel scholarship. As befits a work dealing with the phenomenon of intertextuality, then, I have found it necessary to engage in sustained critical interaction with significant secondary materials in terms of both method and exegetical results in order to question certain aspects of received consensus regarding the ancient biblical and extrabiblical texts with which I deal. More positively, I also engage secondary materials at length in order to draw together others’ fruitful exegetical and theological suggestions about the figure of Isaac in general and his potential role in the Gospel of Matthew in particular.

Even if one rejects certain aspects of my positions or conclusions, however, I believe Isaac could nevertheless be uncovered in the Gospel of Matthew using more traditional methods like redaction criticism, and that Isaac may be seen as a figure complementary to other figures dominating discussions of Matthean Christology, such as Moses and the Suffering Servant. Isaac is indeed *there*, the evidence for his inter-textual presence every bit as substantive and compelling as for any other typological figure.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This monograph is a substantial revision of my doctoral dissertation, defended before my PhD committee at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, in April of 2006. I am most grateful to the editors of the *Novum Testamentum Supplement Series* for publishing it. Many thanks are owed to my research assistants, Elizabeth Eichling, Josh Cohen, Michael Daling and Chris Bruno, competent writers and interpreters in their own right, for their help with research tasks, library runs and proofreading. Any errors are mine (although doubtless Titivillus will have had a hand therein).

I have elsewhere published several pieces written previously as I have worked through my ideas, and I here thank those editors who have granted permission for me to include material from those pieces in the present work. Thanks to Dr. Joseph Jensen for allowing me to incorporate into chapters four, five and ten material from “Obedience unto Death: The Matthean Gethsemane and Arrest Sequence and the Aqedah,” *CBQ* 71 (2009): 507–26. Many thanks also to Dr. Loren Stuckenbruck for permission to incorporate into chapters four and five both the substance of “The Aqedah in the First Century of the Common Era: 4 Maccabees, L.A.B., the Antiquities, and First Clement,” *JSP* (forthcoming) and also a rather condensed version of “The Battle for Isaac: Exploring the Composition and Function of the Aqedah in the Book of Jubilees,” *JSP* 13 (2002): 33–59. Thanks to Dr. Carey Newman of Baylor University Press for granting permission to include material from an essay which is largely a précis of this work, “The Matthean Jesus and the Isaac of the Early Jewish Encyclopedia,” in Richard B. Hays, Stefan Alkier and Leroy A. Huizenga, eds., *Reading the Bible Intertextually* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2009), 63–81. Finally, my thanks to Dr. Lewis Donelson for allowing me to incorporate into chapter six material from “Matt 1:1: ‘Son of Abraham’ as Christological Category,” *HBT* 30 (2008): 103–113, and to incorporate into chapter eight the substance of “The Incarnation of the Servant: The ‘Suffering Servant’ and Matthean Christology,” *HBT* 27 (2005): 25–58.

I am also most grateful to the Fulbright Commission for a Fulbright dissertation fellowship enabling me to spend the 2004–2005 academic year studying and teaching at Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität in

Frankfurt am Main, Germany. I also must give my heartfelt thanks to Dr Stefan Alkier, dean of Protestant Faculty at Frankfurt and Professor of New Testament and the History of the Ancient Church, for mentoring me in semiotics, intertextuality and textual interpretation and giving me opportunities to present, write and teach. Further, thanks are due to Wheaton College (IL), where I currently serve as Assistant Professor of New Testament, which has graciously provided me with several Faculty Development Grants and G. W. Aldeen Memorial Fund Grants permitting me to present papers dealing with various aspects of my thesis at several Society of Biblical Literature and North American Patristics Society annual meetings in the U.S., Vienna and Rome.

The concept of intertextuality teaches us that there is fundamentally nothing new under the sun, and so I must credit and thank the late Dr Don Juel of Princeton Theological Seminary for introducing me to the tradition of the Akedah and for putting the fundamental idea argued here in my head, that Isaac plays a major role in the synoptic tradition, particularly in the scene of Jesus' arrest. He died out of season and is deeply missed by those who had the privilege of knowing him. May he rest in eternal peace. Dr Juel also gave me his blessing to depart Princeton for my doctoral work and study with Dr Richard Hays at Duke University. Dr Hays has proven a wonderful *Doktorvater*, mentor and friend, and I thank him for his constant encouragement and conscientious oversight of the present project. I would also like to thank Dr David Moessner and Dr Ulrich Luz for their detailed comments. I also thank Drs Douglas Campbell and James Crenshaw of Duke and Dr Zlatko Pleše of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for serving on my dissertation committee and providing me with support, guidance and constructive criticism. Thanks are also due to my many friends at Princeton and Duke for their friendship and counsel through seminary and graduate school, especially Dr Shane Berg, now Assistant Professor of New Testament at Princeton Seminary, who has been as a brother to me.

Finally, this book is dedicated to my wife, Kari, who has followed me from school to school and across oceans, making sacrifices again and again as I have pursued my education and vocation. She is ever the trooper, and I treasure her as bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

Leroy A. Huizenga
Wheaton, Illinois

Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

CHAPTER ONE

THE FATE OF THE FIGURE OF ISAAC IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

1.1 TRACES OF ISAAC IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Genesis 22 is a text of enduring significance for Jews and Christians. Judah Goldin writes:

...the *Akedah* story, Genesis XXII, is indeed one of the most terrifying narratives in all of Scripture... So profound was the effect of this account on Jewish memory and speculation, every generation of Jews invoked it as *leitmotif* for its own trials and tragedies. It also penetrated deep into Christianity for its own purposes.¹

The nature and timing of that penetration, however, is greatly contested. Some scholars assert that the radical interpretive innovations of the *Akedah*, such as the concept of an Isaac enthusiastic to participate in his own sacrifice, developed early and were thus a resource for the earliest Christian reflection on the person and work of Jesus. The majority, however, maintain that the figure of Isaac plays little, if any, role therein.

The Gospel of Matthew, for its part, evinces suggestive traces of the figure of Isaac generally neglected or underestimated by scholars. For instance, in the very first chapter, the angel's announcement to Joseph that Mary would bear a Son to be called Jesus (μὴ φοβηθῆς παραλαβεῖν Μαρίαν τὴν γυναῖκά σου... τέξεται δὲ υἱόν, καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν, Matt 1:20–21) recalls God's announcement to Abraham that Sarah would bear a son to be called Isaac (ἰδοὺ Σαρρα ἡ γυνή σου τέξεταί σοι υἱόν καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ισαακ, Gen 17:19 LXX). Given that both Isaac and Jesus are promised children and that both Sarah and Mary are women outside the bounds of normal childbearing status who conceive by divine power, the typological possibilities are intriguing.

¹ Judah Goldin, preface to Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial: On the Legends and Lore of the Command to Abraham to Offer Isaac as a Sacrifice: The Akedah* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967; repr., Woodstock, Vt.: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1993), vii.

This potential typology between Isaac and Jesus may extend throughout the Gospel, as other Matthean passages seem to evoke the figure of Isaac as well. The most famous and contested of possibilities concerns the heavenly voices at the baptism (Matt 3:17) and transfiguration (Matt 17:5), which may allude to Gen 22 LXX. In each of these Matthean passages, the divine voice deems Jesus ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός. In Gen 22 LXX the same syntax is found three times (allowing for changes in case): God tells Abraham to sacrifice τὸν υἱόν σου τὸν ἀγαπητόν Isaac (v. 2), and the angel describes Isaac using the same phrase in the genitive case (vv. 12, 16). The briefer phrase ὁ ἀγαπητός μου also appears within the citation of Isa 42:1 in Matt 12:18. Jesus' death is associated with Passover (Matt 26:1–35), as was the Akedah in early Jewish tradition. Not only does the Gethsemane and arrest sequence (Matt 26:36–56) present several conspicuous allusions to Gen 22 LXX, but in thematic terms Jesus here seals his own fate and goes willingly to his death, as did the Isaac of the Akedah in early Jewish tradition.

In general, the Matthean Jesus and the Isaac of Jewish Scripture and tradition resemble each other to a remarkable degree: both are promised children conceived under extraordinary circumstances, beloved sons who go obediently and willingly to their redemptive deaths at the hands of their respective fathers at the season of Passover. It is my contention that when rightly read as a coherent narrative in its first-century cultural setting, the Gospel of Matthew presents a significant Isaac typology.

1.2 FOUR REASONS FOR THE NEGLECT OF ISAAC IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Scholars have largely overlooked this, however, for at least four reasons: (1) neglect of Matthean narrative dynamics; (2) failure to give full consideration to the potential relevance of extracanonical interpretations of Gen 22; (3) confusion regarding the dating and definition of the Akedah; and (4) neglect of the phenomenon of Matthean allusion.

1.2.1 *Redaction Criticism and the Neglect of Narrative Dynamics*

The diachronic emphasis of traditional historical-critical approaches, particularly redaction criticism, has led to a neglect of the synchronic, narrative dimensions of the Gospel of Matthew. Redaction criticism

largely concerns itself with comparing parallels among the synoptic Gospels in search for theological content and *Sitz im Leben* to the exclusion of the precise narrative form of the Gospels,² which necessarily involves a serious underestimation of the cumulative force of the many allusive references to Isaac in the Gospel of Matthew. Commentators who grant that Isaac may play a role in one passage often rule out a role for Isaac in other passages without giving sufficient weight to the possibility that the subtle presence of Isaac in the former increases the likelihood that Isaac plays a role in the latter. The leading English commentary on Matthew, that of W. D. Davies and Dale Allison in the International Critical Commentary series, demonstrates this tendency clearly. While affirming the possibility of a role for Isaac in some passages, they rule it out in others.

With regard to “son of Abraham” in Matt 1:1, Davies and Allison note that the appellation could designate Jesus “as one like Isaac, who carried wood on his back and was willing to give up his life in obedience to God,” but then maintain that “nowhere else in the First Gospel is Jesus clearly associated with Isaac.”³ Shortly thereafter they maintain that the angel’s words to Joseph in Matt 1:20–21, although matching the syntax of Gen 17:19 LXX, merely “exhibit a form common to birth annunciation narratives” and thus do not allude to Gen 17:19 LXX in particular.⁴ The word ἁγαπητός in Matt 3:17 is considered a translation of בחירי (“my chosen”) from Isa 42:1 MT.⁵ This judgment is based in part on their conclusion that Matthew uses ἁγαπητός to translate בחירי in the citation of Isa 42:1 in Matt 12:18.⁶ In their treatment of Matt 12:18, however, they assert that the substitution of ὁ ἁγαπητός for בחירי “is no doubt explained by the baptismal tradition.”⁷ With regard

² As Mark Allan Powell notes, in redaction criticism “more attention is paid to comparisons between a passage and its parallels in other Gospels than to the internal connections it may have to other passages in the same book” (*What is Narrative Criticism? A New Approach to the Bible* [London: SPCK, 1993], 7).

³ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (3 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–1997), 1:159. Neither is Jesus explicitly associated with Moses, however, although parallels seem to abound. See Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

⁴ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 1:208–09.

⁵ Ibid., 1:341.

⁶ Ibid., 1:337–41.

⁷ Ibid., 2:325.

to ἀγαπητός in the transfiguration (17:5), the reader is simply referred to the discussion of the baptism.⁸

Even though there have been several indications that Isaac may play a significant role in the Gospel, Davies and Allison have found no role for him to this point. It is thus interesting that Davies and Allison suggest that the Matthean Gethsemane scene has verbal and conceptual parallels to Gen 22 LXX. They observe that Matt 26:36 and Gen 22:5 have καθίσσατε αὐτοῦ in common and find intriguing conceptual parallels: "...both Abraham and Jesus take along three people...Abraham and Isaac separate themselves from others for worship or prayer...both episodes are set on a mountain...each involves a trial."⁹ No conclusions are here drawn, however, and even though they identify several significant allusions to Gen 22 LXX within the subsequent scene of Jesus' arrest, they come to no conclusions regarding any role for Isaac or Abraham.¹⁰

One would be justified in asking if, based on the intertextual principles of "recurrence" and "clustering,"¹¹ the allusions identified in the Gethsemane and arrest scenes strengthen the possibility that the prior Matthean passages in which Isaac may play a role do indeed allude in some way to texts and traditions about Isaac, and, conversely, if finding allusions in them would thus strengthen the possibility that the Akedah is in play in the Gethsemane and arrest sequence. Yet Davies's and Allison's heavily redactional approach permits little occasion for the consideration of synchronic, narrative dimensions of the Gospel, and thus the potential cumulative force of the several allusions to Isaac in the course of the narrative fails to find sufficient consideration.

One hesitates to critique commentators whose erudition and exegetical expertise one can only dream of emulating. It is certainly easier to find potential holes in a co-authored commentary written over a decade and consisting of hundreds upon hundreds of pages than it is to write one. Further, their magisterial multi-volume work permits only selective discussion of selected issues in spite of its great length, as they concede

⁸ Ibid., 2:701–02.

⁹ Ibid., 3:494.

¹⁰ Ibid., 3:505–18.

¹¹ The terms are from Richard Hays's criteria for detecting and interpreting allusions, presented originally in *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 29–32, and again with slight revision in "Who Has Believed Our Message? Paul's Reading of Isaiah," in *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 34–45.

with regret.¹² Yet their treatment of the passages discussed above raises serious issues concerning the sufficiency of a chiefly redaction-critical approach for the evaluation of the Gospel's intertextual relationships and intratextual constitution, as it fails to facilitate serious consideration of the Gospel's narrative dimensions that would permit adequate consideration of the cumulative force of potential allusions.

In many Gospel commentaries, methodology is given short shrift or simply left unarticulated. Redaction criticism, considered the pinnacle of the progression of historical methods of Gospel research, is often simply assumed to be the proper approach. To their credit, Davies and Allison spend several pages discussing their approach, in which they advocate traditional historical criticisms and critique supposedly ahistorical literary approaches like New Criticism.¹³ While calling for methodological pluralism and allowing that literary and canonical criticism have a "subsequent place" to source, form and redaction criticism, they give the latter explicit pride of place. Yet in a later paragraph, a slightly different picture emerges:

We seek what has been called the "plain sense" of the text. This is not its "literal" sense and not its "original" sense, which varies in different parts of it, but the sense which the sentences, the paragraphs, and longer units, the structure, shape and flow of the gospel as a totality present. To seek the "plain sense" requires dealing with its original language; with its historical and cultural setting; with its history, and therefore with its sources; with the literary forms and the final literary and canonical shape with which it confronts us, so that the interpretation arrived at is not strained or against the grain of the text, but is governed by the criteria which the text itself supplies.¹⁴

This description of the convergence of diachronic and synchronic aspects is inviting—even "final literary and canonical shape" finds mention—but in the course of the commentary, synchronic, narrative dynamics play little interpretive role. Davies and Allison lay more stress upon the developmental history of individual pericopes than

¹² They write, "Considerations of cost and exigencies of printing have required restraint. We could have wished for more expansive treatments of many aspects of the text but have had to prefer leanness to fullness both in the introductory sections and in the body of the commentary" (*Saint Matthew*, 1:x). Allison also notes that he wrote *The New Moses* because he could not fit all he wanted to discuss in the commentary (*New Moses*, ix).

¹³ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 1:1–5; on New Criticism, 1:2–3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:5.

their intratextual relation in the course of the narrative. The “flow of the gospel as a totality” is in practice not taken seriously,¹⁵ and “the criteria which the text itself supplies” are permitted little regulative function. The parts thus seem much greater than the whole. At root, the commentary’s approach is redaction-critical and, as a result, the synchronic, narrative dynamics of the Gospel are largely lost.

What is the problem with redaction criticism, and what method of Gospel interpretation might prove more fruitful?¹⁶ Redaction criticism involves three questionable assumptions: (1) that objective, determinative interpretation necessitates discovering the intention of the evangelist as empirical author; (2) that discovering an evangelist’s intention necessitates examining the significance of alterations to presumed sources; and (3) that the evangelist’s intention concerns static, cognitive propositional theology. That the second and third assumptions lead to the neglect of much of the text an evangelist actually wrote and thus a Gospel’s narrative dynamics is now recognized not only by advocates of more text-centered literary-critical approaches¹⁷ but also by leading Matthean scholars partial to more traditional historical-critical methods, even while they continue to defend the first assumption. Graham Stanton writes:

¹⁵ Interestingly, Davies and Allison take synchronic, compositional factors most seriously when they are useful for defending the common modern solution to the synoptic problem, to which they are strongly committed. Consider, for instance, their discussion of the Matthean version of Jesus’ response to the High Priest (σὺ εἶπας, Matt 26:64) *vis-à-vis* the Markan version (ἐγὼ εἶμι, Mark 14:62), a passage which greatly complicates the theory of Markan priority (*ibid.*, 3:528–29).

¹⁶ For introductions and assessments of redaction criticism, see Gail P. C. Streeter, “Redaction Criticism,” in *To Each its Own Meaning* (ed. Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 105–21; John R. Donahue, “Redaction Criticism: Has the *Hauptstrasse* become a *Sackgasse*?” in *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament* (ed. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon and Edgar McKnight; JSNTSup 109; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 27–57; Graham Stanton, “Redaction Criticism: The End of an Era?” in *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (ed. Graham Stanton; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 23–53; and Lawson G. Stone, “Redaction Criticism: Whence, Whither, and Why? Or, Going Beyond Source and Form Criticism without Leaving Them Behind,” in *A Biblical Itinerary: In Search of Method, Form and Content: Essays in Honor of George W. Coats* (ed. Eugene E. Carpenter; JSOTSup 240; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2007), 77–90.

¹⁷ See David B. Howell, *Matthew’s Inclusive Story: A Study in the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 15–17; and David M. Rhoads, “Narrative Criticism: Practices and Prospects,” in *Characterization in the Gospels: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism* (ed. idem and Kari Syreeni; JSNTSup 184; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 267.

In the first phase of redaction criticism the modifications made by the evangelist to his sources were taken to be indicative of his theological concerns. More recent redaction critical study of Matthew has quite rightly emphasized that in addition, attention must be given to the traditions which are incorporated with little or no changes, for by accepting them Matthew makes them his own. [...] Matthew's gospel must be read and interpreted as a whole. Even when the evangelist incorporates earlier traditions without significant modification, re-interpretation takes place by dint of the immediate context in which they are placed, and also by dint of the framework and distinctive thrust of the whole gospel. So it is important to consider the sweep of the whole gospel; the first redaction critics often misguidedly adopted an atomistic approach.¹⁸

Ulrich Luz also describes the Gospel of Matthew as a "coherent book" whose constitution demands attention to synchronic, narrative factors¹⁹

¹⁸ Stanton, "Redaction Criticism," 52. One may ask, however, if there ever was a second group of redaction critics who did incorporate narrative, synchronic concerns. Redaction critics began to realize that the Gospels did have narrative features with which redaction criticism did not adequately deal, and so an appreciation for the evangelists as creative editors led to a call for their appreciation as authors and therefore for methods that would take account of their works as wholes. Norman Perrin thus wrote in 1972 that Gospel studies should concern itself with "the category of general literary criticism," and that "if the evangelists are authors, then they must be studied as other authors are studied" ("Evangelist as Author: Reflections on Method in the Study and Interpretation of the Synoptic Gospels and Acts," *BR* 17 [1972]: 9–10). At that time, however, literary criticism and emerging critical theory were busy proclaiming the death of the author from structuralist, formalist and poststructuralist perspectives, and thus literary methods become divorced from traditional historical-critical concerns. Composition criticism did try to unite synchronic and diachronic concerns but has largely failed; most brands of literary criticism remain unconcerned with or hostile to the concept of authorial intention, and redaction critics continue focusing on the author's theological perspective and *Sitz im Leben* independent of the narrative dynamics of the Gospels as stories (see Stephen D. Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989], 4–8). While emphasizing the need for greater attention to the synchronic, narrative dimensions of Gospel studies, Stanton disdains newer, non-traditional approaches to criticism, asking rhetorically: "Are we reaching the end of the redaction-critical era? Or have some scholars been bewitched by the twin goddesses, Novelty and Fashion?" ("Redaction Criticism," 23). Certainly many academics often succumb to the sultry siren songs of such goddesses, suffering an entrancement beyond and subversive of all reason, but to suggest that approaches to the Gospels other than traditional historical-critical methods lack rigor or value strikes one as excessively reactionary.

¹⁹ Ulrich Luz, *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew* (NTT; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1–6. See also idem, "Matthean Christology Outlined in Theses," in *Studies in Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 83–96: "The gospel of Matthew is a story that needs to be read from beginning to end. It discloses itself only when read—several times if possible—in its entirety" (83); "The Immanuel Christology which frames Matthew's story shows that Matthew's theology as a whole is narrative in character. The Matthean Jesus story is the new story of God's presence with his people" (85).

as well as readers,²⁰ but he also maintains that authorial intention is necessary for determinative interpretation:

Methodisch kontrollierbar fragen kann man allein nach Gliederungsmerkmalen, die sich auf der Textebene als bewußt beabsichtigt glaubhaft machen lassen. Sie erlauben einen Rückschluß auf die intentio auctoris.²¹

This interest in and attention to the synchronic, narrative dimensions of the Gospel of Matthew is certainly welcome, but the concern for authorial intention still involves the persistent attention to sources and thus involves the critic in a fundamental internal contradiction: in the redactional quest for authorial intention, one actually goes beyond and behind an evangelist's intention. The evangelists did not intend their Gospels to be read in the way redaction critics read, with such scrupulous attention to their sources. The empirical Saint Matthew, one could safely wager, did not pass out copies of Mark and Q to his congregation and insist that they take careful note of his editorial work. Rather, the evangelists composed wholes and intended their Gospels to be read and heard as such.²²

²⁰ Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (4 vols.; EKKNT 1; Düsseldorf: Benziger, 1985–2002), 1:42–47 (all references to the first volume of Luz's commentary are to the revised version of 2002, unless otherwise noted). In the *Vorwort* to the revised edition of the first volume of his commentary, Luz mentions that he has endeavored to take literary criticism, sociological approaches and reader-driven exegesis more seriously (ix).

²¹ *Ibid.*, 1:23. Allison makes the same assertion in several places; see, for instance, his "Foreshadowing the Passion," in *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 219. So too Robert H. Gundry, who in the 1994 revision of his commentary writes, "My commentary continues to example redaction criticism and may thereby seem old-fashioned in comparison with the structural, literary, narrative, social scientific, materialist, feminist, psychological, and deconstructive criticisms more recently in vogue. If one wants to discover the meaning of a text intended by its author, however, redaction criticism still provides the most useful tool where the author's sources are known with some confidence, as in the case of Matthew. For both the adoption and the adaptation of those sources set a standard by which to measure that meaning" (*Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution* [2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994], xii–xiii).

²² Howell writes, "Although the final narrative text may in some ways resemble a mosaic, it was intended to be read as a homogenous whole" (*Matthew's Inclusive Story*, 22). Even if the evangelists intended their works to be read in more than one sitting, to be used in a more piecemeal way in the context of worship, they still did not intend for a given reading to be compared with whatever sources they used in such a meticulous manner. Of immense relevance here is Richard Burridge's work, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Greco-Roman Biography* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004). If Burridge is correct that the Gospels belong to the ancient genre of *bios*, and an increasing number of scholars, including Allison ("Structure, Biographical

Scholars of a traditional historical-critical bent believe recourse to authorial intention is necessary to avoid indeterminate, arbitrary, haphazard and ahistorical interpretation. Yet this is a *non sequitur*, for one can employ methods that aim to determine the import of the signs of the text in and of themselves as the evangelist arranged them on the page without concern for any mental acts of the empirical author behind the text. Disciplined, historically-oriented theoretical approaches concerned with narrative dynamics do exist, such as Umberto Eco's theory of the Model Reader, which interprets for the *intentio operis*, the intention of the signs of the text itself, which is the theory to be appropriated for the present project.²³

1.2.2 *The Influence of the MT Canon and the Neglect of Extrabiblical Texts and Traditions*

Another reason scholars overlook references to Isaac is their focus on the form and content of texts in the MT tradition of the Old Testament and attendant neglect of actual Old Testament versions and interpretations of portions thereof circulating in Jewish culture. Many scholars tacitly operate with anachronistic assumptions regarding the stability of the scope and meaning of the Old Testament canon, the availability of copies of the Scriptures, and the nature of reading and interpretation in early Judaism. Unlike the situation in the modern world, copies of biblical texts were scarce and relatively few people could read.²⁴

Impulse, and the *Imitatio Christi*," in *Studies in Matthew*, 142–47) think that he is, then approaches that take Matthean narrative dynamics seriously will produce better interpretive fruit than redaction criticism, or any other sort of criticism that fails to recognize the narrative integrity and beauty of the Matthean story. On this point, see Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, 298–91.

²³ See, *inter alios*, Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Advances in Semiotics; Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1979), hereafter *Role*. Eco's theory of the Model Reader will be presented in detail in the following two chapters.

²⁴ Catherine Hezser asserts that "the Jewish literacy rate was well below the 10–15 percent (of the entire population, including women) which Harris has estimated for Roman society in imperial times" (*Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001], 496, referring to William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989], 328). Meir Bar-Ilan asserts that 3 percent of Palestinian Jews were literate ("Illiteracy in the Land of Israel in the First Centuries C.E.," in *Essays in the Social Scientific Study of Judaism and Jewish Society* [ed. Simcha Fishbane and Stuart Schoenfeld; 2 vols.; Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav, 1992], 2:55). See also David McLain Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: The Origins of Scripture and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), esp. 273–85; and James L. Crenshaw, *Education in Ancient Israel: Across the Deadening Silence* (New York: Doubleday, 1998).

For those who could, the Scriptures existed in many and diverse versions and interpretation seldom involved the search for the one plain sense of a text. The contents of the Scriptures thus existed within the life of the culture, in tradition and in worship. Historical investigations of the “New Testament use of the Old Testament” must consider the situation on the ground, as it were, in Jewish culture, and not tacitly assume that stable meanings of MT texts or reasonably faithful Greek translations thereof patent to all lie behind New Testament citations of and allusions to the Old Testament. In theory, most scholars would readily concur. In practice, many scholars act otherwise. Consider Luz’s comments on the possibility of a reference to Isaac in the Matthean version of the transfiguration:

Nach einer jüdischen Überlieferung lag die Wolke auch über dem Berg Morija, als Abraham seinen geliebten Sohn Isaak opferte (Gen 22,2.12.16). Damit ist eine zweite biblische Geschichte genannt, an die unsere Szene anklingen könnte. Insbesondere der geliebte Sohn der Himmelsstimme erinnert an die Opferung Isaaks und nicht an Mose auf dem Sinai. Aber diese Geschichte ist im ganzen von der Verwandlung Jesu sehr verschieden; alle anderen Züge der Morijaerzählung passen nicht dazu.²⁵

Even though Luz mentions a particular Jewish tradition, his words read as if he assumes that (1) there is one decisive narrative of Moriah and (2) that all of its other features must fit if one is to see a reference to Gen 22 here. In Jewish antiquity, however, as Luz well knows, many varieties of the Moriah narrative were in circulation, both in different biblical versions and in extrabiblical documents and traditions. Further, it is not necessary for two stories to match perfectly for one to recall another; the text could invoke particular aspects of a prior story and leave others dormant. One may rightly wonder, then, if certain aspects of the Moriah narrative as reinterpreted in early Judaism would fit with the Matthean story of the transfiguration, if one should listen not simply for echoes of Scripture but for echoes of *interpreted* Scripture.

Another example: in R. W. L. Moberly’s book *The Bible, Theology, and Faith: A Study of Abraham and Jesus*, which deals exclusively with the figure of Abraham and the Matthean Jesus, Moberly limits his focus to Gen 22 MT:

²⁵ Luz, *Matthäus*, 2:507.

Christian usage of Genesis 22 thus established a possible double typology, with Abraham as a type of the Christian and Isaac as a type of Christ. Although both led to many interesting interpretations, one problem inherent in the second typology is that it could be relatively superficial in the extent of its engagement with the issues that the Old Testament text poses. Although, for example, the parallel carrying of the wood of sacrifice and of the cross is imaginatively suggestive, it has no bearing on the issues of moral or theological importance in the text. Likewise, discussions about the ways in which both Isaac and the ram could represent Christ certainly have a logic of their own, but it is a logic which may too easily distract from more important concerns. To be sure, Isaac's willing self-offering is a substantive issue; but because the Genesis text focusses self-offering on Abraham more than on Isaac, a focus on Isaac will tend to draw its strength from elsewhere than the Genesis text.²⁶

This is true, but what if the narrative logic of the Gospel of Matthew itself does indeed point us to traditions from elsewhere than the MT textual tradition of Gen 22?

Given his strict canonical focus, Moberly therefore explicitly excludes the importance of extrabiblical traditions for his study:

First, one cannot be other than largely agnostic on the historical question of what traditions were not only known by Matthew but also deliberately utilized by him... Secondly, it is important to read Matthew's narrative as meaningful in its own right... taking with full seriousness the intrinsic logic of Matthew's portrayal of Jesus. To be sure, all kinds of factors from beyond the text may be significant for its interpretation, and what may be found to be interpretatively important cannot be predicted in advance. But there is a fine line between, on the one hand, recognizing Matthew as deeply rooted in, and liable to be misinterpreted in the absence of good knowledge of, Jewish tradition and, on the other hand, construing Matthew as some kind of cryptogram or palimpsest whose interpretation tends to depend on the ingenious production of extraneous material.²⁷

Moberly's point about the dangers of what is routinely called "parallelomania"²⁸ is well taken, but his position is nevertheless highly problematic. What if "the intrinsic logic of Matthew's portrayal of Jesus" permits or even demands an identification of Jesus with Isaac in some respect?

²⁶ R. W. L. Moberly, *The Bible, Theology, and Faith: A Study of Abraham and Jesus* (Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 134.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 186–87.

²⁸ The term comes from Samuel Sandmel's famous SBL address, "Parallelomania," published in *JBL* 81 (1962): 1–13.

Even if one wants to perform explicit Christian canonical exegesis and focus on the purely canonical relationship of Gen 22 and the Gospel of Matthew—precisely what Moberly wishes to do²⁹—the Gospel happens to be composed of words—signs—that are not autonomous but live and move and have their being and therefore their meaning and function within their conventional use in the wider culture, and that function with the greatest coherence and economy when read in light of the cultural encyclopedia within which the Gospel was produced and first received. Textuality and intertextuality cannot be separated. One cannot read “Matthew’s narrative as meaningful in its own right” without taking note of its intertextual connections to its culture, for it is composed of specific cultural materials arranged in a specific taxis. Moberly here commits the sin of ahistoricism with which Davies and Allison are rightly concerned, reflected in his omission of discussion of extrabiblical materials pertaining to Gen 22.³⁰

Not only does the focus on the MT as the version par excellence leave other versions and extrabiblical traditions unexplored, but it also leads to an overestimation of the potential role of the so-called “Suffering Servant,” a construct of modern scholarship that likely did not exist in early Judaism or earliest Christianity and can only be based on MT Isaiah, not on the Greek or Aramaic versions.³¹ Since both figures play sacrificial roles, the figure of the Servant often prevents one from perceiving the figure of Isaac, a phenomenon seen clearly in most commentaries. For instance, in Davies’s and Allison’s discussion of passages where ἀγαπητός appears, it is the figure of the Servant which is given pride of place; potential references to Isaac are discounted.

²⁹ Moberly expressly writes that his aim is “an exercise quite distinct from studying the specific NT usage of Genesis 22” (*Bible, Theology, and Faith*, 184).

³⁰ In chapter 4, entitled “Ancient and Modern Interpretations of Gen 22,” Moberly discusses Gen 22 briefly in the New Testament and the Fathers before moving on to the works of Wilhelm Vischer and Gerhard von Rad. In the subsequent chapter Moberly deals with readings of Gen 22 coming from the perspective of the hermeneutics of suspicion. There is therefore a serious “absence of good knowledge of Jewish tradition” in Moberly’s work, and, in my view, the result is that the Gospel of Matthew is misinterpreted, in spite of Moberly’s most interesting and productive suggestions regarding the Matthean Jesus and Abraham.

³¹ A controversial claim, to be sure, but defensible and demonstrable nonetheless. The modern concept of the Suffering Servant has been and can only be based on the MT. Greek Isaiah and the Aramaic Targum to Isaiah present versions of the Servant radically different from that of the MT; the Servant does not suffer or die a vicariously atoning death in accord with the will of God. I will examine this in greater detail in treating Matt 12:18–21 in chapter 8.

With regard to the baptism, they write that “we may be confident that Matthew saw in Mt 3,17 a confirmation of the truth of Jesus’ divine sonship as proclaimed in Ps 2 and the truth of his being the Spirit-endowed servant of Deutero-Isaiah.”³² Further, they claim that the quotation of Isa 42:1–4 in Matt 12:17–21 indicates the fundamental importance of the Servant for Matthean Christology:

In Mt 12:18 *παῖς* is not associated with Jesus’ passion but has a much broader reference. Indeed, “servant” is here a comprehensive title. It covers Jesus’ entire ministry, all that Jesus says and does (cf. 8.17). Thus Jesus is the humble, suffering servant not only at the end but from the beginning.³³

Finally, they assert that the transfiguration also presents Jesus as the Servant: “...it is fitting that Jesus should be presented as the ‘*ebed Yahweh*’ in a pericope so influenced by Mosaic motifs, for Moses was known as the ‘*ebed*’ or *παῖς par excellence* (cf. Exod 14.31; Num 12.7–8).”³⁴ The implication for a role for Isaac is that “any connexion between the transfiguration—in any of its synoptic or presynoptic versions—and the Akedah is unlikely.”³⁵

Titular phrases such as “the Spirit-endowed servant of Deutero-Isaiah” or “the ‘*ebed Yahweh*’” are problematic, however, for the Greek and Aramaic versions of Isaiah present versions of the Servant Songs radically different from those of MT Isaiah. In the former versions, the so-called Servant simply does not suffer a vicarious, atoning death at God’s behest. Such phrases, however, do reveal the decisive status accorded the MT in the commentary when intertextual questions are under consideration.

What Luz, Moberly and Davies and Allison have done is common to much New Testament interpretation: in practice, they treat the MT version of the Old Testament as a dictionary, the primary matrix and the ideal treasury of images and concepts and narratives from which the New Testament supposedly drew, curiously abstracted from its forms and interpretations in history. But since texts, canons, versions and interpretations exist in history, in a culture, a more appropriate conceptualization is the encyclopedia, a major component of Eco’s

³² Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 1:339.

³³ *Ibid.*, 2:325.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 2:702.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 2:689.

theory of the Model Reader, a socio-semiotic model which includes all the conventionalized knowledge of a culture: not only texts and canons but also versions and traditions, not only what people read but also how they read and how they interpreted what they read.³⁶

1.2.3 *Debating Definitions and the Dating of the Akedah*

The third reason many scholars discount the possibility of a typological role for Isaac in early Christianity in general and the Gospel of Matthew in particular is confusion over definitions and dating. Most scholars speak in absolute terms of “the Akedah,” which raises problems of definition. In their seminal article in 1978, P. R. Davies and Bruce Chilton argued that scholars such as Robert J. Daly³⁷ were engaged in anachronistic legerdemain when they spoke in such absolute terms, since the noun itself does not appear until the Mishnaic period. They maintained that

the term “Aqedah” should not be applied to all expositions related to Genesis 22, where only the verb קָדַע appears...we define the Aqedah as a haggadic presentation of the vicariously atoning sacrifice of Isaac in which he is said, e.g., to have shed his blood freely and/or to have been reduced to ashes. Unless such innovative narrative elements are present, it is misleading to label references or allusions to Genesis 22 as expressions of the Aqedah doctrine.³⁸

In their view, that “doctrine” was an Amoraic invention “occasioned by the dissolution of the Temple cult” as a replacement for the Tamid offering.³⁹ Thus, “expiation” is “the *sine qua non* of the Aqedah,”

³⁶ See Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*; idem, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (Advances in Semiotics; Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1984); and idem, *The Limits of Interpretation* (Advances in Semiotics; Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1990).

³⁷ Robert J. Daly, “The Soteriological Significance of the Sacrifice of Isaac,” *CBQ* 39 (1977): 45–75; and idem, *Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978.

³⁸ Philip R. Davies and Bruce D. Chilton, “The Aqedah: A Revised Tradition History,” *CBQ* 40 (1978): 514–15. Davies elsewhere offers another similar definition: the Akedah must be understood as “an actually accomplished sacrifice in which blood was shed, constituting a definitively expiatory or redemptive act for all Israel” (“Passover and the Dating of the Aqedah,” *JJS* 30 [1979]: 59). See also idem, “The Sacrifice of Isaac and Passover,” in *Studia Biblica 1978* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1979), 127–32, and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “The Sacrifice of Isaac in Qumran Literature,” *Bib* 83 (2002): 211–12, who makes similar arguments.

³⁹ Davies and Chilton, “Aqedah,” 516–17. Abraham Geiger was the first modern scholar to articulate the position of Davies and Chilton and like-minded scholars; see

a feature they assert is lacking in earlier retellings of Gen 22, such as found in *Jubilees*, the writings of Philo and Josephus, *L.A.B.* and 4 Maccabees.⁴⁰

The call for terminological precision is commendable. Many varied interpretations and rewritings of Gen 22 exist in the extant literature, each with particular contours and nuances. To lump them all together by speaking explicitly of “the Jewish Aqedah theology” as Daly does⁴¹ or acting “as if the whole constellation is always present once the parts of the tradition are attested”⁴² as Geza Vermes often does flattens important differences, obscures the particularities in the development of the tradition and wrongly imports later developments into earlier times.

Yet Davies’s and Chilton’s stringent definition is highly problematic itself. Vermes is fundamentally correct when he complains that Davies and Chilton “arbitrarily selected the most advanced theological speculation of the rabbis and then claimed that this constituted the essence of the Aqedah.”⁴³ As Bruce Fisk trenchantly observes, such a strict definition functions to “rule out, by definition, an emerging doctrine of the Aqedah prior to 70 C.E., since in the main lines of Judaism before 70 a substitute for the temple was not being sought[.]”⁴⁴ Further, their definition “has the twin effects of overstressing atonement or expiation in the tradition and of denying the label ‘Aqedah’ to all but the latest, most developed stages of that tradition.”⁴⁵ Significant developments were emerging in early Judaism that proved congenial to Christian appropriation, even without that which Davies and Chilton would consider a robust doctrine of expiation. Other soteriological models were operative in early Judaism and Christianity, and soteriology is not always the chief concern of Jewish or Christian tradents appropriating aspects of the Aqedah as a developing interpretive tradition. Davies and Chilton are right to warn against the anachronistic retrojection of

his essay, “Erbsünde und Versöhnungstod: deren Versuch in das Judenthums einzudringen,” *Jüdische Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Leben* 10 (1872): 166–71.

⁴⁰ Davies and Chilton, “Aqedah,” 515.

⁴¹ Daly, “Soteriological Significance,” 48.

⁴² Alan F. Segal, “‘He who did not spare his own son’: Jesus, Paul, and the Aqedah,” in *From Jesus to Paul: Studies in Honor of Francis Wright Beare* (ed. Peter Richardson and John Hurd; Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984), 171–72.

⁴³ Geza Vermes, “New Light on the Sacrifice of Isaac from 4Q225,” *JJS* 47 (1996): 144.

⁴⁴ Bruce N. Fisk, “Offering Isaac Again and Again: Pseudo-Philo’s Use of the Aqedah as Intertext,” *CBQ* 62 (2000): 504 n. 75.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 504.

later elements into earlier strata, but it is something else altogether to assert that these later elements constitute the essence of “the Akedah.” As Fisk observes, that later retellings emphasize expiation

does not diminish the significance of those embellishments and transformations of Isaac in traditions which were already known in the first century... Among these must be included the aggadic [*sic*] emphasis upon Isaac’s willing and active participation in the act of offering, and the view that his self-offering was virtuous, meritorious, and even beneficial for others.⁴⁶

Vermes himself is thinking along similar lines when he suggests that instead of concentrating on expiation, the Akedah should be thought to “consist in Isaac’s conscious, willing, and meritorious participation in the sacrifice,”⁴⁷ a position fairer to the development of the interpretive traditions of the Akedah, in which the most striking development is the transition of the figure of Isaac from the passive, docile lad of Gen 22 MT into an active adult eager to participate in the ritual of his slaughter. Yet even here the idea of a more precise definition is still problematic, since any definition risks excluding important elements present in the tradition or, conversely, including certain elements anachronistically or otherwise inappropriately. The problem consists in trying to find the “essence” or “*sine qua non*” of the Akedah; it is better to think in Wittgensteinian terms of family resemblances. Therefore, rather than attempting to provide an absolute definition of the Akedah, I will use the term as a convenient collective designation for the various reinterpretations and rewritings of Gen 22, including Gen 22 MT itself, and speak frequently of “aspects” of the Akedah.

A second issue concerns dating. Not only did Davies’s and Chilton’s strict definition lead them to underestimate the importance of certain developments in earlier documents; they idiosyncratically dated many of these documents late. Vermes notes:

[T]he supporting external evidence (Josephus, Ps.-Philo and 4 Macc.) adduced by me to argue for the first-century C.E. currency of the Aqedah story was declared to be post-70 C.E. Ps.-Philo and 4 Macc., contrary to mainstream opinion, were dated to 70–135 C.E. *Jewish Antiquities* was

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Vermes, “New Light,” 144.

dated correctly to the end of the century, but without taking into account the fact that Josephus regularly echoes traditional views.⁴⁸

Dating documents and interpretive traditions within them is certainly challenging and Vermes is perhaps wrong to imply that the majority of scholars would date *L.A.B.* and 4 Maccabees to the period before 70 C.E. Yet strong cases can be made for dating these and other documents earlier and Davies and Chilton were thus too quick to dismiss the potential significance of their witness. Even if certain documents were composed late, the manner of their references to the figure of Isaac demonstrates they nevertheless present aspects of the Akedah with deep roots in Jewish tradition, with wide and deep cultural currency.

It is not only a matter of the dating of certain documents; it is also a matter of the relative age and common currency of aspects of the Akedah revealed therein. For example, many references to Isaac's willingness in documents such as *L.A.B.* and 4 Maccabees, while certain, are brief. The passing nature of such remarkable references to Isaac's willingness indicate that the content could be taken for granted, for recent innovations necessitate detailed presentation, not longstanding traditions. For instance, one of the brothers of 4 Maccabees calls out to another, "Remember whence you came and at the hand of what father Isaac gave himself to be sacrificed for piety's sake" (13:12). Later, it is also related that Isaac, "seeing his father's hand, with knife in it, fall down against him, did not cower" (16:20). The particular character of the manner of the appropriation of the Akedah in such instances indicates that the concept of a willing, obedient, fearless Isaac had common cultural currency and thus (in Vermes's words) "echoes traditional views." With regard to such references, a law of inverse correlation is in operation: the more slender a definite reference, the more ancient and widespread its cultural currency (assuming, of course, that the document operates with a modicum of rhetorical effectiveness). This must be kept in mind when dating documents and evaluating the significance of their presentation of aspects of the Akedah.

Davies's and Chilton's article was motivated by the perceived carelessness of scholars such as Vermes and Daly in making rather free use of texts and traditions that are either late relative to early Christianity or difficult to date, particularly evidence from targumic and rabbinic literature. The traditions therein are striking and generally well developed

⁴⁸ Ibid.

and thus make the strong evidence of documents such as 4 Maccabees and *L.A.B.* seem weaker by comparison. In order to buttress my case, then, I shall avoid detailed examination of presentations of the Akedah in targumic and rabbinic literature. The evidence provided by other earlier documents is strong enough to stand on its own, showing that the radical aspects of the Akedah emerged early, well before the rise of that Jewish phenomenon called early Christianity.

1.2.4 *The Lure of the Formula Quotations and the Neglect of Matthean Allusions*

The fourth reason scholars neglect the role of the figure of Isaac in the Gospel of Matthew has been the sustained interest in the formula quotations, for Isaac's role in the Gospel is discerned through the phenomenon of allusion alone. As Donald Senior reminds us, "with few exceptions, virtually all studies of Matthew's use of the Old Testament concentrate on the formula quotations,"⁴⁹ which Matthean scholars generally consider "the most distinctive and revealing feature of Matthew's use of the Old Testament."⁵⁰ Major monographs such as those by Stendahl,⁵¹ Rothfuchs,⁵² Strecker,⁵³ Soares Prabhu,⁵⁴ Cope⁵⁵ and Menken⁵⁶ (among others) have inquired into the nature of, number of, role of, and appropriate terminology for the formula quotations.⁵⁷ Stanton's

⁴⁹ Donald Senior, "The Lure of the Formula Quotations: Re-Assessing Matthew's Use of the Old Testament with the Passion Narrative as a Test Case," in *The Scriptures in the Gospels* (ed. Christopher M. Tuckett; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 89.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁵¹ Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and its Use of the Old Testament* (2d ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968).

⁵² Wilhelm Rothfuchs, *Die Erfüllungszitate des Matthäus-Evangeliums. Eine biblisch-theologische Untersuchung* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1969).

⁵³ Georg Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit: Untersuchung zur Theologie des Matthäus* (FRLANT 82; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962).

⁵⁴ George Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew* (AnBib 63; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976).

⁵⁵ O. L. Cope, *Matthew: A Scribe Trained for the Kingdom of Heaven* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1976).

⁵⁶ Maarten J. J. Menken, *Matthew's Bible: The Old Testament Text of the Evangelist* (BETL 173; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004).

⁵⁷ The quotation is often seen as the paradigmatic instance of intertextuality. In the realm of Biblical studies, for instance, Sylvia Pellegrini writes, "Aus der Varietät all dieser Referenz-Phänomene, die die intertextuelle Skala schildert, wird im folgenden nur die Form betrachtet, auf die in den biblischen Texten am häufigsten rekuriert wird, und die Genette (1982) außerdem für die Referenzstrategie im eigentlichen Sinne hält: das Zitat" (*Elija—Wegbereiter des Gottessohnes: eine textsemiotische Untersuchung im Markusevangelium* [Herders biblische Studien 26; Freiburg: Herder, 2000], 135). This

essay on the Matthean use of the Old Testament chiefly concerns the formula quotations.⁵⁸ This fascination with the formula quotations is bound up with the redaction-critical concern of isolating and abstracting an empirical author's theology (understood in cognitive-propositional terms) from the text. Hence it has been considered important to identify which quotations are actually from the empirical author's hand, how he shaped them, which Bible he used, whether he used *testimonia*, and what changes he might have made to his sources. There are two issues here pertinent to this study.

First, because scholars partial to traditional historical methods have used the formula quotations as a key for unlocking the author's mind, most have ignored the phenomena of Matthean allusions and other forms of appropriation of the Old Testament, since it is assumed that it is easier to trace intention through overt quotations rather than (supposedly) covert allusions.⁵⁹ Discerning the role Isaac plays in the Gospel of Matthew, however, concerns the investigation of verbal, syntactical allusions and thematic parallels. As Senior reminds us, the Gospel of Matthew is tied to the Old Testament in a variety of ways beyond the formula quotations.⁶⁰

Second, the perennial fascination with the formula quotations has caused scholars to emphasize the importance of the so-called Suffering Servant figure for Matthean Christology, since the Gospel presents loose citations from the so-called Servant Songs on two occasions (Isa 53:4 in Matt 8:17 and Isa 42:1–4 in Matt 12:17–21). As discussed above, the Servant figure functions to prevent the perception of the significance of the figure of Isaac for the Gospel of Matthew.

phenomenon is seen also in literary theory. Mary Orr's recent introduction to intertextuality subsumes allusion under quotation, giving the latter thirty-seven pages and the former roughly a page and a half (*Intertextuality: Debates and Context* [Cambridge: Polity, 2003], 139–40).

⁵⁸ Stanton, "Matthew's Use of the Old Testament," in *It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture: Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars* (ed. D. A. Carson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 205–19. The essay is reprinted with the same title in Stanton, *Gospel*, 346–63.

⁵⁹ Gundry, however, does pay attention to Matthean allusions, as does Senior and, to a much lesser extent, Stanton in his essay. On the presumed covert nature of allusion, see Joseph Michael Pucci, *The Full-Knowing Reader: Allusion and the Power of the Reader in the Western Literary Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 38–40.

⁶⁰ Senior names programmatic statements (e.g., Matt 5:17, 26:56), direct quotations (e.g., Hos 6:6 in Matt 9:13 and 12:7), verbal allusions (e.g., Matt 26:36 to Gen 22:5 LXX), and elements inspired by passages, events, or figures in the Old Testament (e.g., the putative Moses typology). See Senior, "Lure," 105–08.

1.3 SUMMARY

I have suggested that the Gospel of Matthew evokes the figure of Isaac but that scholars often overlook and underestimate his role for four chief reasons. First, scholars have neglected the narrative dynamics of the Gospel. Second, scholars have neglected extrabiblical traditions of the Akedah in the encyclopedia of Jewish culture. Third, confusion surrounds issues of the definition of the Akedah and the dating of significant aspects thereof. Fourth, scholars have neglected the phenomenon of Matthean allusion, through which alone references to Isaac are mediated.

In the following chapter, I will present Umberto Eco's semiotic theory of the Model Reader, which takes both narrative dynamics and historical location seriously, and discuss the discernment and interpretation of allusions within his theoretical framework. Subsequent chapters will demonstrate that important aspects of the Akedah were present in the cultural encyclopedia in which the Gospel of Matthew was produced and first received and that the Gospel presents a significant Isaac typology through the mechanism of allusion. The concluding chapter will suggest that the purpose of this typology is to present Jesus Christ as the decisive sacrifice along the lines of a Christus Victor model in service of the Matthean theme of temple replacement.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MODEL READER, THE ENCYCLOPEDIA AND TEXTUAL INTENTION

The pleasure of the text is not necessarily of a triumphant, heroic, muscular type. No need to throw out one's chest. My pleasure can very well take the form of a drift. *Drifting* occurs whenever *I do not respect the whole*, and whenever, by dint of seeming driven about by language's illusions, seductions, and intimidations, like a cork on the waves, I remain motionless, pivoting on the *intractable* bliss that binds me to the text (to the world).

Roland Barthes¹

[T]he semiotic theories of interpretive cooperation, such as my theory of the Model Reader (Eco 1979), look at the textual strategy as a system of instructions aiming at producing a possible reader whose profile is designed by and within the text, can be extrapolated from it and described independently of and even before any empirical reading. [...] In a totally different way, the most radical practices of deconstruction privilege the initiative of the reader and reduce the text to an ambiguous bunch of still unshaped possibilities, thus transforming texts into mere stimuli for the interpretive drift.

Umberto Eco²

2.1 UMBERTO ECO: OPEN WORKS AND MODEL READERS

As put forth in the previous chapter, the redaction-critical approach to the Gospel of Matthew involves serious neglect of the cumulative force of the many significant allusions to Isaac therein. Further, it is not true that redaction criticism alone permits determinative interpretation by providing access to the intention of the empirical author. Nor is it true that literary methods are necessarily indeterminate, arbitrary and unhistorical. In this chapter, I will present Umberto Eco's theory of the

¹ Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (trans. Richard Miller; New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 18. Emphases original.

² Eco, *Limits*, 52.

Model Reader, a disciplined, determinative, historical reader-response approach that permits adequate consideration of Matthean narrative dynamics and thus the phenomenon of Matthean allusion.

Most of the world knows Eco as the author of the wildly successful novel *The Name of the Rose*,³ but he was an accomplished semiotician and literary theorist well prior to his career as a novelist. His theoretical work is marked by concerns for interpretive objectivity and involves a realist view of language as a socio-cultural phenomenon.⁴ The work with which Eco made his academic mark was *Opera aperta* (*The Open Work*), published in 1962, in which Eco argued against the distinction between “high” and “low” in culture and in art and for the necessity of the cooperation of the recipient in the interpretation of artistic works; James Joyce’s modernist texts *Finnegan’s Wake* and *Ulysses* served as paradigms of “open” literary works.⁵ One detects affinities with both structuralist and poststructuralist tendencies. Eco applies structuralist techniques to the analysis of objects of mass culture and displays a fascination with the literature of high modernism. Eco did move past his early structuralism, but not in the direction of French poststructuralism and deconstruction as the concept of “openness” might suggest. Indeed, Eco believes that his ideas in *The Open Work* have been routinely misunderstood:

[M]y readers focused mainly on the “open” side of the whole business, underestimating the fact that the open-ended reading I supported was an activity elicited by (and aiming at interpreting) a *work*. In other words, I was studying the dialectics between the rights of texts and the rights of

³ Eco, *The Name of the Rose* (trans. William Weaver; San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983).

⁴ Eco’s early work involved an explicit rejection of Crocean Idealism, in which art concerns the artist’s intuition, emotion and individual creativity; Eco thought that Croce’s aesthetics divorced works of art from historical realities. Eco wrote his doctoral thesis on the aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas, and found that Aquinas’ system contained the same defect: the scholastic concern for essences did not square with cultural realities. Eco thus regarded Aquinas as the forerunner of structuralism. This concern for concrete cultural realities undergirds all his theoretical work, as we shall see. For a succinct and accessible introduction to Eco as both theorist and writer, see Peter E. Bondanella, *Umberto Eco and the Open Text: Semiotics, Fiction, Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁵ Eco, *Opera aperta: forma e indeterminazione nelle poetiche contemporanee* (Milan: Mondadori, 1962). The English version, which is slightly different in content and arrangement from the Italian, is *The Open Work* (trans. Anna Concogni; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989). On Joyce, see Eco, *Open Work*, 10–11.

their interpreters. I have the impression that, in the course of the last few decades, the rights of the interpreters have been overstressed.⁶

Summarized briefly, Eco's mature theory of literary interpretation concerns the *intentio operis*, the intention of the text, and its interaction with the socio-linguistic cultural encyclopedia within which it was produced. He holds this to be a *via media* between author-centered and more radical reader-response and deconstructive theories of interpretation:

Between the theory that the interpretation is wholly determined by the author's intention and the theory that it is wholly determined by the will of the interpreter there is undoubtedly a third way. Interpretive cooperation is an act in the course of which the reader of a text, through successive abductive inferences, proposes topics, ways of reading, and hypotheses of coherence, on the basis of suitable encyclopedic competence; but this interpretive initiative of his is, in a way, determined by the nature of the text. By the "nature" of the text I mean what an interpreter can actualize on the basis of a given Linear Manifestation, having recourse to the encyclopedic competence toward which the text itself orients its Model Reader (cf. *Role*).⁷

Eco's theory thus consists of two fundamental elements: the text and the cultural encyclopedia within which the text was produced.⁸ The text, which consists of encyclopedic materials, determines what materials from the encyclopedia are to be actualized. The Model Reader lies at the juncture where the linear manifestation of the text connects with the cultural encyclopedia in the most coherent and economic way possible, and good empirical readers are those who approximate the position of the Model Reader.

⁶ Eco, *Limits*, 6. Emphasis original.

⁷ Eco, "Two Problems in Textual Interpretation," in *Reading Eco: An Anthology* (ed. Rocco Capozzi; Advances in Semiotics; Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1997), 43–44.

⁸ Georg Steins analyzes Eco in terms of three poles: text, reader, and encyclopedia, thus separating reader and text, because he is concerned to exploit fruitfully the dialogicality and polyvalence of the Old Testament canon. See Steins, *Die Bindung Isaaks im Kanon (Gen 22): Grundlagen und Programm einer kanonisch-intertextuellen Lektüre: mit einer Spezialbibliographie zu Gen 22* (Herders biblische Studien 20; Freiburg: Herder, 1999), 94–102. Crenshaw critiques Steins for not doing justice to the polyvalence of the canon, while Brevard Childs critiques him for doing away with the necessary regulative univocity of the canon. See Crenshaw, review of Steins, *JBL* 121 (2002): 152–54, and Childs, "Critique of Recent Intertextual Canonical Interpretation," *ZAW* 115 (2003): 177.

The model is helpful for biblical studies for three reasons. First, the all-encompassing nature of the encyclopedia necessitates the consideration of all cultural phenomena (texts, interpretive traditions, ways of reading, etc.) in the culture in which a document is produced. When employed in the realm of biblical studies, it therefore permits and necessitates the examination of extrabiblical traditions of interpretation generated by Gen 22 as well as versions of Gen 22 other than the MT. Second, as a semiotic model concerned with the signs which constitute texts, Eco's theory begins where all interpretation must begin, with the black marks on the page, the signs which "comprise the universal formal fundamental elements of every instance of communication."⁹ Third, the concern for the intention of the text itself ensures that the entire text is considered. For our purposes, the Gospel of Matthew as a narrative whole is taken seriously.

2.2 THE ENCYCLOPEDIA AS CULTURAL TREASURY

2.2.1 *Dictionaries vs. Encyclopedias*

Eco sets his conception of the encyclopedia in conscious opposition to dictionary models of semantic representation. John Haiman, whom Eco hails for producing "the most complete and convincing overview of the problem" of dictionary conceptions of language,¹⁰ asserts that it has been an "article of faith" among philosophers of language that "knowledge of (the semantics of) a language" is appropriately classified in a dictionary, while "knowledge of the real world" is rightly catalogued in an encyclopedia.¹¹ Having its roots in Saussurean linguistics, the dictionary pertains to ideal, abstract, precise, theoretical language, autonomous of experience,¹² whereas the encyclopedia pertains to language that occurs in the realm of experience. Furthermore, in light of Saussure's influence, many have contended that the only proper object of linguistic study is the structure of language codified in a dictionary format.¹³ In short,

⁹ Stefan Alkier, "Intertextuality and the Semiotics of Biblical Texts," in *Reading the Bible Intertextually* (ed. Richard B. Hays, Stefan Alkier and Leroy A. Huizenga; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2009), 3–22.

¹⁰ Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 47.

¹¹ John Haiman, "Dictionaries and Encyclopedias," *Lingua* 50 (1980): 330.

¹² *Ibid.*, 332.

¹³ *Ibid.*

"Dictionaries relate words to other words. Encyclopedias, in more or less sharp contradistinction, relate words to extralinguistic facts."¹⁴

Eco holds that those who think in dictionary terms draw "a sharp line that divides semantic (dictionary) competence and pragmatic and encyclopedic competence."¹⁵ In such approaches

the theory of the ideal competence of an ideal speaker, carefully defended against the disturbances of historical and social intercourse, has a good chance of being useful to no one, not even a dictionary publisher, who is equally concerned with the continuous revision of his product. Although to some extent the history of a language is a function of the existence of dictionaries, the latter is more frequently a function of the former.¹⁶

Eco's critique is based on his conviction that "[m]eanings are common social beliefs, sometimes mutually contradictory and historically rooted, rather than undated and theoretically fixed constructs."¹⁷ It will not do to sever language from its location and function within a cultural framework, for a dictionary is "devised to describe linguistic knowledge as independent of factual matters" and thus "will depend entirely upon factual knowledge."¹⁸ This results in a contradiction, for "a dictionary would account only for a restricted set of dictionary words definable through object words which are not described by the dictionary itself."¹⁹

2.2.2 *The Dictionary as Porphyrian Tree*

In much the same way as Eco sees recent trends in deconstructive and reader-response criticism presaged in Hermetic and Gnostic thought,²⁰ Eco sees the error of the dictionary in modern philosophies of language prefigured in the ancient concept of the Porphyrian Tree. In his *Isagoge*, Porphyry, discussing Aristotle's *Categories*, "designed a unique tree for substances," from which "every subsequent idea of a dictionary-like

¹⁴ Ibid., 332–33.

¹⁵ Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 78.

¹⁶ Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, 99.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Eco, "Dictionary vs. Encyclopedia," in *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics* (ed. Thomas Sebeok; 3 vols.; Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), 1:203.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ A common theme in his essays in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (ed. Stefan Collini; Tanner Lectures in Human Values; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) and *The Limits of Interpretation*, both of which have become cult classics among those disaffected by poststructuralism and deconstruction.

representation stems.”²¹ Dictionaries attempt to order all within the “Porphyrian Tree” of genera and species on the basis of differentiae. The problem, however, is that “the entire universe of differentiae is polluted by metaphorical ambiguities.”²² One term of differentiation in one locus may not be the same as in another locus (e.g., as Aristotle says, “sharp” can be an adjective defining both a sound and a material substance such as a knife [*Topics* 1.15.106a ff]), and if this is the case, the order and finitude that the Tree (and thus the Dictionary) promises are illusory. “Genera and species are linguistic ghosts that cover the real nature of the tree and of the universe it represents: a world of pure differentiae.”²³ Eco incisively shows that all differentiae purported to be essential are in fact accidental, and the result is that

[t]he tree of genera and species, the tree of substances, blows up in a dust of differentiae, in a turmoil of infinite accidents, in a nonhierarchical network of *qualia*. The dictionary is dissolved into a potentially unordered and unrestricted galaxy of pieces of world knowledge. The dictionary thus becomes an encyclopedia, because it was in fact a *disguised encyclopedia*.²⁴

The tree is an illusion because the tree is an Ideal; Eco’s fundamental contention is that language is a social and thus relatively concrete phenomenon, something Real, as opposed to an abstract, ideal, theoretical system. The meaning of “sharp” depends on its specific use in a specific socio-linguistic cultural situation. Eco is concerned with the real competence of a speaker, which is “impossible to describe through purely dictionary-like properties... a dictionary holds only for an artificial language or for a dummy natural language.”²⁵ In the encyclopedia “there is no difference between linguistic knowledge and factual knowledge because the knowledge represented is a ‘cultural’ knowledge... a cultural competence, recorded by an intertextual body.”²⁶

The encyclopedia is therefore the treasury of all pieces of cultural knowledge, regardless of truth or significance:

It does not register only “truths” but, rather, what has been said about the truth or what has been believed to be true as well as what has been believed

²¹ Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 59.

²² *Ibid.*, 64.

²³ *Ibid.*, 66.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 68. Emphasis original.

²⁵ Eco, “Dictionary vs. Encyclopedia,” 1:202.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:203.

to be false or imaginary or legendary, provided that a given culture had elaborated some discourse about some subject matter; the encyclopedia does not register only the “historical” truth that Napoleon died on Saint Helena but also the “literary” truth that Juliet died in Verona.²⁷

The encyclopedia thus registers all pieces of cultural knowledge: codes, rules, conventions, history, literature, truth claims, discourses, all the units that culture comprises; everything. Drawing on C. S. Peirce’s triadic concept of semiotic processes, Eco describes the encyclopedia as the grand universe of semiosis.²⁸ As such, it is *potentially* unlimited: “an encyclopedia-like representation . . . takes place only by means of *interpretants*, in a process of unlimited semiosis.”²⁹ Since in Peirce’s semiotics an interpretant can become a representamen or sign leading to further interpretants and thus unlimited semiosis, Eco describes the encyclopedia as a rhizomatic labyrinth.³⁰

2.2.3 *The Encyclopedia as Labyrinth*

Linear labyrinths offer only one direction. A maze, by contrast, is a labyrinth which “displays choices between alternate paths, and some of the paths are dead ends. In a maze one can make mistakes.”³¹ In the net of a rhizomatic labyrinth, by contrast, “every point can be connected with every other point, and, where the connections are not yet designed, they are, however, conceivable and designable. A net is an unlimited territory.”³² Eco continues:

[A]t every node of it no one can have the global vision of all its possibilities but only the local vision of the closest ones: every local description of the net is a *hypothesis*, subject to falsification, about its further course; in a rhizome blindness is the only way of seeing (locally), and thinking means to *grope one’s way*.³³

The encyclopedia is a pseudotree, which assumes the aspect of a local map, in order to represent, always transitorily and locally, what in fact is not representable because it is a rhizome—an inconceivable globality.³⁴

²⁷ Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 83–84.

²⁸ Ibid., 77–78; Eco, “Dictionary vs. Encyclopedia,” 1:206.

²⁹ Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 68.

³⁰ Ibid., 80–84.

³¹ Ibid., 81.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 82.

³⁴ Ibid., 83.

At this point one may feel Eco is very close to certain radical theoretical positions, but Eco's theory of the encyclopedia is the fruit of reflection on how language actually works, not why it must fail, and it codifies more or less concrete pieces of cultural knowledge. Eco writes that the encyclopedia is "virtually *infinite*"³⁵ precisely because "it takes into account multiple interpretations realized by different cultures: a given expression can be interpreted as many times, and in as many ways, as it has been actually interpreted in a given cultural framework."³⁶ Deconstruction is actually the final nihilistic fruit of the structuralist-dictionary conception of language, language abstracted from its actual functions in actual cultures. The encyclopedia is opposed to a deconstructive view of language; it roots language firmly in culture and its conventions, not in the abyss.³⁷ Since it is the collection of cultural interpretants, the encyclopedia contains everything; since it separates signifier from signified, the deconstructive world contains nothing. The function of the encyclopedia, therefore, is positive; although the encyclopedia is "never accomplished" and "exists only as a *regulative idea*," Eco maintains that "it is only on the basis of such a regulative idea that one is able actually to isolate a given portion of the social encyclopedia so far as it appears useful in order to interpret certain portions of actual discourses (and texts)."³⁸

As a model representing the totality of world knowledge and pragmatic processes, the encyclopedia embodies the limitless potential of interpretations. As a particular instantiation of cultural conventions, however, a text is a limited actualization of the encyclopedic possibilities. Eco writes, "A natural language is a flexible system of signification conceived for producing texts, and texts are devices for blowing up or

³⁵ Ibid. Emphasis original.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ John M. Ellis notes that the deconstructive attack on the author and emphasis on "textuality" does not lead to "cut[ting] the tie with any idea of a statable meaning," as if the death of the author removed the constraints of the rules and conventions of language (*Against Deconstruction* [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989], 115). Ellis writes, "For the assumption that to liberate a text from its author is to liberate it from all constraints is a primitive one. It leaps from one extreme to another: total constraint or none at all. Any productive argument should by now have focused on the *kind* of constraints and how they operate. There is one obvious constraint that operates on all texts: the language they are written in" (120).

³⁸ Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 84.

narcotizing pieces of encyclopedic information.”³⁹ The encyclopedia is potential, the text actual. The encyclopedia is unlimited, the text limits. The text directs the Model Reader through the rhizome of the encyclopedia on a particular intended path.

2.3 THE MODEL READER AND THE INTENTION OF THE TEXT

Although Eco’s theory of the Model Reader is often lumped together with other reader-oriented approaches,⁴⁰ it is perhaps the strictest. Wolfgang Iser, for example, gives the reader a good deal of freedom.⁴¹ By contrast, Eco holds that the interpretive choices a text elicits are directed and constrained by that text in the progressive reading of the narrative. In light of misunderstandings regarding his conception of openness and his concern to counter radical reader-response and deconstructive criticism, Eco has in later writings spoken less of the Model Reader and more about the *intentio operis*, the “intention of the text.” The Model Reader and the text are two sides of the same coin, for the Model Reader is the reader that the text requires for its proper actualization.⁴² The Model Reader reads to discern the *intentio operis*, the intention of the text.

³⁹ Ibid., 80.

⁴⁰ Schlomith Rimoth-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Routledge, 2002), 118–20.

⁴¹ See Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 274–94. Iser writes, “The impressions that arise as a result of this process [of reading] will vary from individual to individual, but only within the limits imposed by the written as opposed to the unwritten text. In the same way, two people gazing at the night sky may both be looking at the same collection of stars, but one will see the image of a plough, and the other will make out a dipper. The ‘stars’ in a literary text are fixed; the lines that join them are variable” (282).

⁴² Eco is not possessed of such hubris as to say that a particular interpretation can be deemed the one correct one. Rather, certain interpretations are falsifiable: “We can thus accept a sort of Popper-like principle according to which if there are not rules that help to ascertain which interpretations are the ‘best ones,’ there is at least a rule for ascertaining which ones are ‘bad.’ This rule says that the internal coherence of a text must be taken as the parameter for its interpretation” (*Limits*, 60). Interpreting texts is a communal enterprise that approximates correctness in the long run.

2.3.1 *What the Model Reader Is: The Dialectical Relationship of Text and Encyclopedia*

Eco's most systematic incursion into textual interpretation is *The Role of the Reader*.⁴³ In *Role*, Eco posits a reader-oriented theory of interpretation emphasizing openness, the encyclopedic universe of unlimited triadic semiosis, and the necessity of the reader. Yet the same Eco also wrote, "Between the mysterious history of a textual production and the uncontrollable drift of its future readings, the text *qua* text still represents a comfortable presence, the point to which we can stick."⁴⁴

Eco here makes plain that interpretation begins with the text itself, what he in more technical language describes in terms of "linear manifestation" or "lexematic surface." The Model Reader is postulated and determined by the text itself read in light of the cultural encyclopedia in force at the time and place of its production. For Eco, a text is a particular actualization of certain of the possibilities allowed by the system of the encyclopedia. The encyclopedia does allow for unlimited semiosis, but "the notion of unlimited semiosis does not lead to the conclusion that interpretation has no criteria" because "unlimited interpretation concerns systems not processes. A linguistic system is a device from which, and by using which, infinite linguistic strings can be produced."⁴⁵ Texts, however, are not the total system of the encyclopedia; a text is "the result of the manipulation of the possibilities of the system," and thus is not open in the way the system is open; for "[i]n the process of producing a text one reduces the range of possible linguistic items."⁴⁶

In his critique of certain deconstructive and radical reader-response theories in his more recent writings Eco brings up the *intentio operis* repeatedly and even speaks of the "nature" and "properties" of texts, and such language betrays how different Eco's theory is from other reader-oriented theories. Eco can speak of texts in these text-immanent

⁴³ *Role* is the English version (not a translation proper, as it contains different material and rearrangement of prior material) of *Lector in fabula: la cooperazione interpretativa nei testi narrativi* (Milan: Bompiani, 1979). The German version is a faithful translation of the Italian original: *Lector in Fabula: Die Mitarbeit der Interpretation in erzählenden Texten* (trans. Heinz G. Held; München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998), hereafter *Lector*.

⁴⁴ Eco, "An Author and His Interpreters," 70; and idem, "Between Author and Text," in Collini, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, 88.

⁴⁵ Eco, "Author," 59.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

terms because, in his view, texts direct and limit responses: “an artistic text contain[s], among its major analyzable properties, certain structural devices that encourage and elicit interpretive choices.”⁴⁷ His Model Reader is an ideal reader, a “textual strategy”⁴⁸ whose “profile is designed by and within the text.”⁴⁹ A text postulates its Model Reader, a “fictitious reader,” and “the main business of interpretation is to figure out the nature of this reader, in spite of its ghostly existence.”⁵⁰ Eco thus stresses that even though texts are necessarily “open” to various degrees,

You cannot use the text as you want, but only as the text wants you to use it. An open text, however ‘open’ it be, cannot afford whatever interpretation... An open text outlines a ‘closed’ project of its Model Reader as a component of its structural strategy.⁵¹

Why, then, speak of the reader at all? Why not simply speak in text-immanent terms? Eco’s theory of the Model Reader is the fruit of his earlier observations that all works of art—literary or otherwise—are more open or less open; to various degrees and in a variety of ways, they require the active participation of the viewer or reader or hearer for their actualization as works of art. Drawing on earlier debates surrounding his book *The Open Work*, Eco critiques structuralist approaches to textual interpretation (here with regard to Lévi-Strauss’s and Jakobson’s analysis of Baudelaire’s *Les Chats*) for ignoring “if not a precise and empirical reader, at least the ‘addressee’ as an abstract and constitutive element in the process of actualization of a text.”⁵² Such an approach ignores the recipient’s role (as well as the author’s), and could be schematized as follows:

[Author] Text [Reader]

The work of art—here a text—is conceived of as a self-contained object with inherent, intrinsic properties, not dependent on any reader for their actualization.

⁴⁷ Eco, *Limits*, 50.

⁴⁸ Eco, *Role*, 11.

⁴⁹ Eco, *Limits*, 52.

⁵⁰ Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 15–16.

⁵¹ Eco, *Role*, 9.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 4.

Eco also criticizes the approach of information theory, particularly that of Roman Jakobson, in which the sender encodes an objective message to be decoded by the addressee. This approach does take the recipient into account but as an ultimately passive receiver of objective information:⁵³

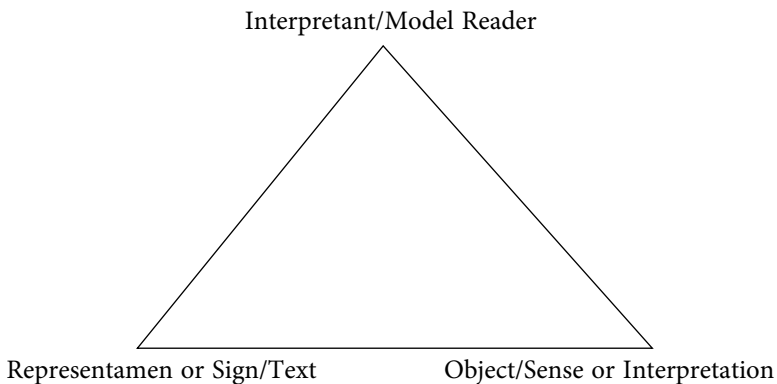
Sender → Message → Addressee

In terms of textual interpretation, this amounts to:

Author → Text → Reader

The reader stands at the end of the process and has little to do but swallow what is served up; the reader appears to be a passive consumer.⁵⁴

Eco recognizes, however, that the reader is an active producer of information in the dynamic process of interpretation, actualizing the discursive structures of the text's linear manifestation by taking recourse to the appropriate encyclopedia. In terms of Peirce's triadic sign concept, the linear manifestation of the text corresponds to the representamen or sign itself; the Model Reader corresponds to the interpretant; the interpretation corresponds to the object, the sense made of the linear manifestation of the text. This involves the Model Reader fully in the triadic process:



⁵³ Eco critiques this approach in *A Theory of Semiotics* § 2.15 (139–150), and *Role*, 5.

⁵⁴ This is the fundamental model Powell advocates as an ideal paradigm of the literary-critical method (*Narrative Criticism*, 8–9).

This dynamism is the reason Eco can speak in terms of the “nature” or “properties” of a text on the one hand and yet still emphasize the indispensable role of the reader for its actualization on the other; his is no purely text-immanent approach. It is the reader that orders content to the black marks on the page. The reader does so, on the other hand, on the basis of known cultural conventions in the pursuit of making coherent sense. Eco’s model is dynamic yet controlled, and he thus depicts it as a dialectical process:

It is clear that I am trying to keep a dialectical link between *intentio operis* and *intentio lectoris*. The problem is that, if one perhaps knows what is meant by “intention of the reader,” it seems more difficult to define abstractedly what is meant by “intention of the text.” [...] The text intention is not displayed by the Linear Text Manifestation. Or, if it is displayed, it is so in the sense of the purloined letter. One has to decide to “see” it. Thus it is possible to speak of text intention only as the result of a *conjecture* on the part of the reader. The initiative of the reader basically consists in making a conjecture about the text intention. [...] Thus, more than a parameter to use in order to validate the interpretation, the text is an object that the interpretation builds up in the course of the circular effort of validating itself on the basis of what it makes up as its result. I am not ashamed to admit that I am so defining the old and still valid “hermeneutical circle.”⁵⁵

The text thus does not make sense of itself by itself. Rather, the Model Reader makes sense of the particular linear manifestation of the text through recourse to the encyclopedia. At every step the Model Reader leaves the text and travels into and through the encyclopedia, searching for the pieces of cultural knowledge that are required for the making of coherent sense.

2.3.2 *What the Model Reader Does: The Process of Reading*

Eco’s complex theory of the Model Reader’s reading process is delineated in various of his works; I will summarize it around several chief foci important for this project.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Eco, *Limits*, 58–59. Emphasis original.

⁵⁶ Warren Carter presents a more narrow summary of Eco’s theory based more strictly on *Role* alone in *Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 108–12.

Principles of Coherence and Economy

The Model Reader is a possible reader “supposedly able to deal interpretively with the expressions in the same way as the author deals generatively with them.”⁵⁷ For Eco, the “author” is a Model Author, a “mere metaphor for ‘textual strategy’ ...”⁵⁸ The Model Reader accepts the task of cooperating with the Model Author, to decode what is encoded; the Model Reader “collaborates” with the Model Author in the process of reading.⁵⁹ Eco writes, “the initiative of the Model Reader consists in figuring out a Model Author that is not the empirical one and that, at the end, coincides with the intention of the text.”⁶⁰ This is to decide to seek coherence in reading, to seek the “sense” of the text. Eco writes, “Text semiotics... is interested in the rules of coherence and cohesiveness of a given text.”⁶¹ This coherence, however, is not a text-immanent coherence but a postulate of the Model Reader.

For Eco, coherence is the decisive factor that enables the Model Reader (and the empirical reader discerning the Model Reader) to discern the *intentio operis*:

How to prove a conjecture about the *intentio operis*? The only way is to check it against the text as a coherent whole. This idea, too, is an old one and comes from Augustine (*De doctrina christiana* 2–3): any interpretation given of a certain portion of a text can be accepted if it is confirmed and must be rejected if it is challenged by another portion of the same text. In this sense the internal textual coherence controls the otherwise uncontrollable drives of the reader.⁶²

The principle of coherence is closely bound up with the principle of economy. In Eco’s semiotic perspective, signs—and thus texts as macro-signs—refer as economically as possible to that which they intend. Since a text is an “economical” mechanism,⁶³ Eco maintains that there are “certain ‘economical’ criteria that on the grounds of which certain hypotheses will be more interesting than others.”⁶⁴ Again, a text is a particular instantiation of the general cultural encyclopedia, and the task of interpretation is to make sense of that particularity.

⁵⁷ Eco, *Role*, 7.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁶⁰ Eco, *Limits*, 58–59.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁶² Eco, *Limits*, 59; see *idem*, “Author,” 60; and *idem*, *Limits*, 148–49.

⁶³ Eco, *Lector*, 63.

⁶⁴ Eco, *Limits*, 5.

Locating the Linear Text Manifestation

Reading must begin with the “linear text manifestation,” which is “the text such as it appears verbally with its lexematic surface.”⁶⁵ The first task of the reader is to situate the text at hand in its proper socio-linguistic location: “the reader confronts the text linear manifestation with the system of codes and sub-codes provided by the language in which the text is written[.]”⁶⁶ Once the socio-linguistic location is determined, the reader may begin making sense by linking the material of the linear text manifestation with the encyclopedia.

Note that this involves the *historical* location of texts. Eco writes that the role of the addressee involves making “conjectures about the possible sender and the possible historical period in which the text was produced.”⁶⁷ Eco immediately emphasizes that this is not a return to subject-centered, biographical interpretation: “This has nothing to do with researching the intentions of the sender, but it certainly has to do with researching the cultural framework of the original message.”⁶⁸ Interpretation involves the interaction of the text itself with the cultural encyclopedia in which it was written, for the text and its encyclopedia share the same codes, conventions and potential intertexts. Reading Shakespeare in light of T. S. Eliot’s influence upon him may be interesting and bear a certain sort of aesthetic fruit, but it would be a creative and interesting *use* of Shakespeare, not interpretation. Eco presents a different example:

Once Borges suggested that it would be exciting to read the *Imitation of Christ* as if it were written by Celine. The game is amusing and could be intellectually fruitful. I tried: I discovered sentences that could have been written by Celine (“Grace loves low things and is not disgusted by thorny ones, and likes filthy clothes...”). But this kind of reading offers a suitable “grid” for very few sentences of the *Imitatio*. All the rest, most of the book, resists this reading. If, on the contrary I read the book according to the Christian medieval encyclopedia, it appears textually coherent in each of its parts.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Eco, *Role*, 15.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁶⁷ Eco, *Limits*, 5.

⁶⁸ Eco, “Interpretation and History,” in Collini, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, 42.

⁶⁹ Eco, *Limits*, 59–60.

The historical socio-linguistic location of the encyclopedia is important but the sender or author herself is unimportant because language functions according to social conventions; going behind the text's use of those conventions into the author's mind leads to the neglect of the text itself. Knowledge about the author is important only for the identification of the appropriate encyclopedia, for the sender's or author's message is composed with codes and conventions with which the author was familiar. The role of the reader is not to peek into the empirical author's biography or mind but to make sense of the text in light of the appropriate encyclopedia.

Actualizing and Narcotizing

For Eco, "a text is an organism, a system of internal relationships that actualizes certain possible connections and narcotizes others."⁷⁰ Actualizing and narcotizing are natural and necessary for reading. Without them, "every virtual property [would] be taken into account" and "the reader would be obliged to outline, as in a sort of vivid mental picture, the whole network of interrelated properties that the encyclopedia assigns to the corresponding sememe," something that actually transpires in cases of eidetic memory.⁷¹ Hence, the importance of economy: the encyclopedia records every possible pertinent aspect about something, but in interpretation and communication one actualizes only necessary aspects, leaving the rest narcotized. Eco uses the example of Raoul, a character in Alphonse Allais' *Un drame bien parisien*. In this story "it is said that Raoul is a /Monsieur/ and therefore a male human adult. Ought it to be actualized that a human adult has two arms, two legs, two eyes, a warm-blooded circulatory system, two lungs, and a pancreas?" The answer depends on what the text requires, and, in this particular instance, such things need not be actualized. "All these properties are not to be *actually* present to the mind of the reader. They are *virtually* present in the encyclopedia, that is, they are socially *stored*, and the reader picks them up from the semantic store only when required by the text."⁷² The "topic" controls actualization, which the reader hypothesizes by "resorting to a presupposed 'aboutness' of the co-text," co-text being Eco's term for the immediate narrative context.⁷³

⁷⁰ Ibid., 148.

⁷¹ Eco, *Role*, 23.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 24.

The topic in turn determines the proper frames that help the reader decide what is to be actualized and what is to remain narcotized.

Common Frames and Intertextual Frames

The concept of “frame” has roots in Artificial Intelligence as well as text theory. A common frame is a culturally conventionalized commonplace that enables disambiguation and understanding, the making of sense. Eco writes, “Common frames come to the reader from his storage of encyclopedic knowledge and are mainly rules for practical life [...]”⁷⁴ Eco uses another example from Allais, in which Raoul is arguing with Marguerite: “*La main levée, l’œil dur, la moustache telle celle des chats furibonds, Raoul marcha sur Marguerite.*”⁷⁵ Why is Raoul’s hand raised, and how does one know? A raised hand can mean and do many different things: a student uses it to indicate she wants the teacher to call on her; the Queen raises her hand to greet her subjects; fascists use a raised hand to salute; a raised hand can signify a vote. The answer here is that Raoul’s hand is raised to strike Marguerite, and the Model Reader knows this because Raoul’s quarrel with his wife (as well as the description of Raoul) leads the Model Reader to resort to “the conventionalized frame «violent altercation».”⁷⁶ The selection of a proper frame is important for a proper understanding of the sense of the text.

Teun van Dijk describes common frames as “(cognitive) knowledge representations about the ‘world’ which enable us to perform such basic cognitive acts as perception, language comprehension and actions”⁷⁷ and provides the example of a supermarket. Eco writes:

the supermarket frame would involve virtually the notion of a place where people enter to buy items of different types, pick them up without mediation of any vendor, pay for them all together at a terminal counter, and so on. Probably a good frame of this sort involves also the list of all the commodities one can find in a supermarket (brooms: *yes*; cars: *no*).⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Ibid., 21.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 20.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Teun Adrianus van Dijk, *Pragmatics of Language and Literature* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1976), 31. Cited by Eco, *Role*, 21.

⁷⁸ Eco, *Role*, 21. Emphasis original.

Yet there is reciprocity between any common frame and the text that calls for its activation. A frame such as «supermarket» or «violent altercation» contains many virtual properties registered in the encyclopedia. Thus such a frame can have certain of those properties narcotized or actualized. For instance, in relation to marital strife the common frame of «violent altercation» involves unfortunate instances in which, for instance, wives are beaten or husbands are shot. (In Allais's story, the Model Reader comes to learn that in point of fact Marguerite is not struck.) The concept of frame, then, aids in disambiguation, but virtual properties of frames must also be narcotized or actualized by that which is disambiguated.

Common frames concern daily life, the ordinary; "Intertextual frames, on the contrary, are already literary 'topoi', narrative schemes..."⁷⁹ Eco thus makes a division between the two types of frames, but, since text and culture intertwine, they necessarily intersect. Eco tacitly reveals this when he writes that the reader "is convinced that Raoul raises his hand to strike because a lot of narrative situations have definitely overcoded the situation «comic quarrel between husband and wife»."⁸⁰ Eco makes explicit that common and intertextual frames overlap when he writes, "Frequently, the reader, instead of resorting to a common frame, picks up from the storage of his intertextual competence already reduced intertextual frames[.]"⁸¹ Intertextual frames provided by literature proper are stored in the encyclopedia, to be called upon when the text requires it.

Further, "No text is read independently of the reader's experience of other texts. Intertextual knowledge (see especially Kristeva, 1970)⁸² can be considered a special case of overcoding and establishes its own intertextual frames (frequently to be identified with genre rules)."⁸³ Eco understands intertextuality not as reference to specific precursor texts but more generally as a text's participation in the system of literature, of which Eco has a very broad understanding. Early on he rejected a distinction between "high" art and "low" products of mass culture and

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 22.

⁸² Eco here refers to Julia Kristeva, *Le texte du Roman: approche semiologique d'une structure discursive transformationnelle* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1970).

⁸³ Eco, *Role*, 21.

the concomitant rejection of the art and texts of popular culture as legitimate objects of study by intellectuals and theorists, and some of his most interesting work thus concerns James Bond, Indiana Jones, Steve Canyon and Snoopy.

Thus the reference to “overcoding”: overcoding is a semiotic concept that concerns conventions that have achieved a very wide cultural currency and thus are generally simple, formulaic, repetitive and predictable.⁸⁴ Eco believes that the concept of intertextual frames are similar to *topoi* in classical rhetoric or generic motifs.⁸⁵ Examples Eco gives include “«the great train robbery»,”⁸⁶ the duel between the sheriff and outlaw in Westerns,⁸⁷ and “the heroine, in the West, tied by bandits to railroad tracks.”⁸⁸ For Eco, intertextuality chiefly concerns general, formulaic, conventionalized motifs, not specific links to particular precursor texts (or films, comic strips, etc.). Eco discusses intertextuality chiefly in terms of frames due to his interest in popular forms of art in mass culture, such as television and films, and the nature of mass culture further amalgamates common and intertextual frames. In the contemporary world, “The game is played, so to speak, on a ‘broadened’ intertextuality. Any difference between knowledge of the world (understood naively as a knowledge derived from an extratextual experience) and intertextual knowledge has practically vanished.”⁸⁹

Thus, Eco discusses intertextuality as a general phenomenon: it concerns common conventionalized expectations, overcoded commonplaces that have become so routine their origins are lost and largely unnecessary for interpretation. On the other hand, Eco in fact does regularly identify specific links to particular precursor texts, and his ideas about the Model Reader and the intention of the text encourage investigation of such particularities. “Intertextuality” is the chief point at which Eco’s theory requires expansion and clarification, which will be provided in detail in the following chapter.

⁸⁴ See Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics: The Basics* (London: Routledge, 2002), 171, 225.

⁸⁵ Eco, *Lector*, 101.

⁸⁶ Eco, *Role*, 21; Eco, *Lector*, 105.

⁸⁷ Eco, *Lector*, 103.

⁸⁸ Eco, “Innovation and Repetition,” in Capozzi, *Reading Eco: An Anthology*, 22; see Eco, *Lector*, 104.

⁸⁹ Eco, “Innovation and Repetition,” 23.

Forecasts and Inferential Walks: Abduction

When motivated to do so by a perceived feature of the text, the reader may go “outside” of the text and take an “inferential walk” in the encyclopedia in search of information which may or may not aid in the interpretation of the text. The hypothetical forecasts the reader makes are provisional, awaiting confirmation: “The end of the text not only confirms or contradicts the last forecasts, but also authenticates or inauthenticates the whole system of long-distance hypotheses hazarded by the reader[.]”⁹⁰ These perceived features are instances of the nodes or disjunctions of a text, which stimulate the reader to fill them. The “interpretive moves” involved in filling the empty spaces of the nodes or disjunctions are “inferential walks,” which are not “mere whimsical initiatives on the part of the reader, but are elicited by discursive structures and foreseen by the whole textual strategy as indispensable components of the construction of the fabula.”⁹¹

Inferential walks involve the Peircean concept of abduction.⁹² In deduction, a result is deduced from a general rule. In induction, a tentative rule is inferred from several results. Abduction is similar to induction in that it moves in the direction of a rule, but only on the basis of a single result. This is important for textual interpretation in that the “sample size” of results a text provides is usually incredibly small, often a single instance.⁹³ This is exactly the reasoning used by most detectives in the world of fiction, such as Sherlock Holmes and Eco’s own William of Baskerville (a Holmes-figure himself) in *The Name of the Rose*. A detective often finds that clues are few; sometimes a single clue is all one has to go on, at least for the time being. So too with the Model Reader: coming across an interpretive node precipitates

⁹⁰ Eco, *Role*, 32.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² See Charles Sanders Peirce, *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (ed. Charles Hartshorne, Paul Weiss and Arthur W. Burks; 8 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931–1958), 2:623; and Eco, *Theory*, 131.

⁹³ Bondanella explains abduction using an example derived ultimately from Peirce himself: “Logical deduction moves from a general Rule (all the beans from this bag are white), and given a Case (these beans are from this bag), it infers a Result (these beans are or must be white). Induction, on the other hand, from a plurality of Results (all the beans I picked up were white) and a plurality of Cases (they all came from this bag), infers a probable Rule (all the beans in this bag are white). Abduction is interesting because it invents or hypothesizes a general Rule from a single Result: these beans are white; now if I suppose that there is a Rule according to which all the beans in this bag are white, then the Result could be a case of that Rule” (*Umberto Eco and the Open Text*, 85).

abduction, the inferring of a hypothesis to be confirmed in the course of reading.

Nodes that stimulate inferential walks would include citations, potential verbal allusions, conceptual similarities between characters, scenes, and events, and so forth. It is an intertextual (thus extratextual) exercise, for Eco notes that “[i]n order to make forecasts which can be approved by the further course of the *fabula*, the Model Reader resorts to intertextual frames,”⁹⁴ which we have discussed above.⁹⁵

2.4 SUMMARY

The concept of the encyclopedia requires investigation of extrabiblical interpretive traditions and the concept of the intent of the text requires attention to narrative dynamics and provides the possibility of objective interpretation. Eco’s theory of the Model Reader will thus prove fruitful for investigating the role of Isaac and the Akedah in the Gospel of Matthew. The next step is an excursion into intertextual theory. First, in light of rising interest and developments in intertextual theory since the publication of the original Italian version of *Role* and in light of Eco’s sometimes opaque views on the subject, intertextuality is one area in which Eco’s model may benefit from some refining and clarification. Second, this investigation into the possibility of a role for Isaac and the Akedah in the Gospel of Matthew is an exercise in intertextuality, a concept that has occasioned great interest and disquiet in biblical studies in recent years.

⁹⁴ Eco, *Role*, 32.

⁹⁵ It would also be an intratextual exercise if an allusion in question were possibly alluding to a locus elsewhere in the same text.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MODEL READER, INTERTEXTUALITY AND BIBLICAL STUDIES

3.1 INTRODUCTION TO INTERTEXTUALITY

Gospel scholarship may have been slow to appreciate the profound narrative sophistication of the Gospels, thus neglecting their intratextual dynamics, but they have never been negligent in examining extratextual relationships—particularly the phenomenon of biblical quotations and potential parallels of figures in both Judaism and paganism—albeit often without a coherent, explicit methodology.¹ This is why the concept of “intertextuality,” born in the field of literary studies, has been able to sneak in the back door, as it were, in spite of modern biblical scholars’s general skepticism towards many trends in literary criticism. In fact, the term has become rather “fashionable” in biblical studies as a new term designating the old endeavor of source and influence study.² Steve Moyise notes, “Critics who once spoke of ‘sources’ now speak of an author’s intertextual use of traditions.”³ The question concerns whether the fascination with intertextuality is nothing more than an exercise of pouring new wine into old skins.⁴

The term largely made its way to prominence in biblical studies in the year 1989 with the publication of two significant books, *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings*, a collection of essays edited by Sipke Draisma dealing with intertextual theory and exegetical practice,⁵ and Richard Hays’s

¹ See Alkier, “Intertextualität: Annäherungen an ein texttheoretisches Paradigma,” in *Heiligkeit und Herrschaft: Intertextuelle Studien zu Heiligkeitsvorstellungen und zu Psalm 110* (ed. Dieter Sänger; Biblisch-theologische Studien 55; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2003), 1.

² Hans-Peter Mai, “Bypassing Intertextuality. Hermeneutics, Textual Practice, Hypertext,” in *Intertextuality* (ed. Heinrich F. Plett; Research in Text Theory 15; New York: de Gruyter, 1991), 46.

³ Steve Moyise, “Intertextuality and the Study of the Old Testament in the New Testament,” in *The Old Testament in the New Testament: Essays in Honour of J. L. North* (ed. Steve Moyise; JSNTSup 189; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 15.

⁴ Alkier, “Intertextualität,” 1.

⁵ Sipke Draisma, ed., *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings: Essays in Honour of Bas van Iersel* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1989).

Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul, an intertextual investigation of the function of allusions to and echoes of the LXX in Paul's letters.⁶ Neither Hays nor the essayists in the Draisma volume are naïve about the intricacies of intertextuality; rumors of their theoretical naïveté have been greatly exaggerated. Hays's approach in particular is much more theoretically informed than certain critics have admitted.⁷ Hays's "working hypothesis" is that "certain approaches to intertextuality that have developed within literary criticism prove illuminating when applied to Paul's letters."⁸ Hays first briefly explains Kristeva's and Barthes's broad notion of intertextuality as "the study of the semiotic matrix within which a text's acts of signification occur," noting that "[a]ll discourse, in this view, is necessarily intertextual in the sense that its conditions of intelligibility are given by and in relation to a previously given body of discourse."⁹ Hays proposes a more limited version of intertextuality, "focusing on [Paul's] actual citations of and allusions to specific texts."¹⁰ Hays's approach surpasses the traditional philological quest for sources and influences in that he recognizes that identifying allusions "is only the beginning of the interpretive process... The critical task, then, would be to see what poetic effects and larger meanings are produced by the poet's device of echoing predecessors."¹¹ Hays next introduces John Hollander's concept of metalepsis, Hays's main theoretical impetus.¹² We will resume our discussion of Hays's work later; what should be clear at this point is that Hays presents an informed and subtle view of intertextuality that is something other than the traditional and much maligned author-centered quest for sources and influences.

Other writers are not so informed and subtle, however. A prime example of a piece of rather traditional scholarship appropriating the concept as a sophisticated but superficial banner is George Buchanan's

⁶ Hays, *Echoes*, 14–21.

⁷ For instance, Moyise wrongly asserts that Hays does not mention Kristeva (Moyise, "Intertextuality," 15); Hays discusses her ideas on p. 15 of *Echoes*. George Aichele and Gary Phillips are singularly unfair to Hays in "Introduction: Exegesis, Eisegesis, Intergesis," *Semeia* 69–70 (1995); see fn. 48 below.

⁸ Hays, *Echoes*, 15.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 17–18.

¹² Ibid., 18–21; see John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

Introduction to Intertextuality.¹³ Having discovered similarities between Prov 6:20–22 and Deut 6:7–8 in his family’s nightly Bible reading seminar, Buchanan writes:

I could never read scripture the same way after that. From then on I read the Bible like a hound dog on a hot trail, recognizing commentaries wherever I turned... Since then other scholars have become engaged in the research, and the study has been given a new name.¹⁴

That “new name” is “intertextuality.” Moyise rightly notes that for Buchanan, the word intertextuality “covers traditional source criticism, Jewish midrash, typology and what Fishbane called ‘inner-biblical exegesis’.”¹⁵ No mention of the term’s origin and function in literary and cultural studies is to be found, and when biblical scholars employ the term without proper attention to its precise origin, history and essential meaning and intended function, the theoretically sophisticated raise a great (but ironic) hue and cry. Since intertextuality was not conceived as “some neutral literary mechanism” but rather as “a means of ideological and cultural expression and of social transformation,”¹⁶ many scholars of both more traditional historical-critical and radical stripes disparage the uncritical use of the term. Examining the often acrimonious debate in biblical studies first necessitates an overview of the development of the concept in literary studies.

3.2 THE IMPLICATIONS OF INTERTEXTUALITY: POLITICS, PLAY AND BIBLICAL STUDIES

3.2.1 *Origins and Political Implications*

The term was coined in passing by the Bulgarian Julia Kristeva in an essay entitled “Bakhtine, le mot, le dialogue et le roman,” written in 1966 while a student under Barthes in Paris.¹⁷ This was the heyday of French structuralism, which attempted to treat works of art as discrete,

¹³ George Wesley Buchanan, *Introduction to Intertextuality* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen Biblical Press, 1994).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2–3.

¹⁵ Moyise, “Intertextuality,” 15.

¹⁶ Aichele and Phillips, “Introduction,” 9–10.

¹⁷ Kristeva, “Bakhtine, le mot, le dialogue et le roman,” *Critique* 33 (1967): 438–65. ET: “Word, Dialogue and Novel,” in *The Kristeva Reader* (ed. Toril Moi; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 35–61.

unitary objects to be analyzed scientifically.¹⁸ Kristeva's essay represents an attempt at a break with such an approach. Toril Moi notes that this essay is

in many ways a divided text, uneasily poised on an unstable borderline between traditional 'high' structuralism with its yearnings for 'scientific' objectivity... and a remarkably early form of 'post-structuralism' or the desire to show how the pristine structuralist categories always break down under the pressure of the *other* side of language: the irreverent, mocking and subversive tradition of carnival and Menippean satire as described by Bakhtin.¹⁹

Kristeva freely appropriates Bakhtin's ideas, although his actual relevance for what becomes "intertextuality" and the accuracy of Kristeva's understanding of his work is contested.²⁰ Kristeva, for her part, explicitly credits Bakhtin with recognizing the phenomenon of intertextuality:

...each word (text) is an intersection of word [*sic*] (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read. In Bakhtin's work, these two axes, which he calls *dialogue* and *ambivalence*, are not clearly distinguished. Yet, what appears as a lack of rigour is in fact an insight first introduced into literary theory by Bakhtin: any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*.²¹

Bakhtin criticized the abstract nature of Russian formalism and Saussurean linguistics, believing both neglected the inescapable social location of language; every "utterance" is that of an individual and is socially situated.²² Further, every utterance is dialogical, intrinsically related

¹⁸ One gets a taste for the tenor of this approach in reading a critique of Eco's *The Open Work* by Claude Lévi-Strauss: "What makes a work of art a work of art is not that it is open, but rather that it is closed. A work of art is an object endowed with precise characteristics—and the determination of those characteristics is the stuff of analysis—and the object can fully be defined on the basis of these characteristics. When Jakobson and I attempted to conduct a structural analysis of one of Baudelaire's sonnets, we certainly did not deal with this as an 'open work,' in which we would have been able to find everything that following epochs would have ascribed to this work of art. We dealt with it rather as an object, which—after it had been created at one time by an author—displayed, to a certain extent, the precision and consistency of a crystal; for which reason also our function is reduced to setting these characteristics in the proper light" (cited by Eco, *Role*, 3–4).

¹⁹ Moi, *The Kristeva Reader*, 34.

²⁰ See Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000), 56–59, and Mai, "Bypassing," 33.

²¹ Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel," 37. Emphases original.

²² Allen, *Intertextuality*, 16–17.

to speech that has come before it as well as its reception by others.²³ One sees dialogism most clearly in Dostoevsky's novels, in which no one voice predominates but rather in which there is a polyphony of competing and clashing voices, viewpoints and perspectives. Kristeva praises Bakhtin extensively for his contention that literary language is relational, not independent:

Writer as well as 'scholar', Bakhtin was one of the first to replace the static hewing out of texts with a model where literary structure does not simply *exist* but is generated in relation to *another* structure. What allows a dynamic dimension to structuralism is his conception of the 'literary word' as an *intersection of textual surfaces* rather than a *point* (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or the character) and the contemporary or earlier cultural context.²⁴

Kristeva's essay "follows Bakhtin in insisting on the subversive political effects of such language, and thus also comes to prefigure Kristeva's later analysis of the politics of marginality."²⁵ The dynamism of intertextuality thus has a clear revolutionary political dimension:

The poetic word, polyvalent and multi-determined, adheres to a logic exceeding that of codified discourse and fully comes into being only in the margins of recognized culture. Bakhtin was the first to study this logic, and he looked for its roots in *carnival*. Carnavalesque discourse breaks through the laws of language censored by grammar and semantics and, at the same time, is a social and political protest. There is no equivalence, but rather, identity between challenging official linguistic codes and challenging official law.²⁶

This is something more than a new way of looking at literary texts, more than a new avenue of research, something much more than a call for increased attention to specific literary or even cultural intertexts. Kristeva's idea of intertextuality is a call for a new hermeneutics that would take full account of the role of readers in the production of meaning and support political activism.²⁷

This new hermeneutics necessitates an assault on traditional Western logic. Kristeva writes that the Bakhtinian concepts of

²³ Ibid., 19–22.

²⁴ Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel," 36. Emphasis original.

²⁵ Moi, *The Kristeva Reader*, 35.

²⁶ Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel," 36. Emphasis original.

²⁷ Mai, "Bypassing," 47; Thomas R. Hatina, "Intertextuality and Historical Criticism in New Testament Studies: Is There a Relationship?" *BibInt* 7 (1999): 30.

[d]ialogue and ambivalence lead me to conclude that, within the interior space of the text as well as within the space of texts, poetic language is a 'double'. Saussure's poetic *paragram* ('Anagrams') extends from *zero* to *two*: the unit 'one' (definition, 'truth') does not exist in this field. Consequently, the notions of definition, determination, the sign '=' and the very concept of sign, which presuppose a vertical (hierarchical) division between signifier and signified, cannot be applied to poetic language—by defining an infinity of pairings and combinations.²⁸

Kristeva continues by arguing that the idea of the sign in the Western tradition is "a product of scientific abstraction (identity-substance-cause-goal as structure of the Indo-European sentence)" based on a "zero-one" binary system,²⁹ in which "the linguistic, psychic and social 'prohibition' is 1 (God, Law, Definition)."³⁰ Yet any such system cannot "account for the operation of poetic language,"³¹ which is "[t]he only linguistic practice to escape this definition,"³² for poetic language functions zero to two, as it were. That is, Western Aristotelian logic depends (in part) on the law of non-contradiction, but Kristeva claims that poetic language functions quite well by subsuming contradictories within itself—A and non-A coexist therein.³³ Poetic language is thus inherently subversive.

Kristeva's project is therefore directed against the formalist and structuralist tendency to see works of art—literature in particular—as discrete entities independent from culture (and thus politics). In Kristeva's project (and those of her comrades and followers), text is culturalized and culture is textualized:

Developed from and in relation to these modern texts the new semiotic models then turn to the *social text*, to those social practices of which 'literature' is only one unvalorized variant, in order to conceive of them as so many ongoing transformations and/or productions.³⁴

Since texts participate in the cultural sphere, and the cultural sphere is a realm of political and ideological conflict, the phenomenon of intertextuality is not merely a methodological approach concerning sources

²⁸ Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel," 40.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 41.

³¹ Ibid., 40.

³² Ibid., 41.

³³ Allen, *Intertextuality*, 44–45.

³⁴ Kristeva, "Semiotics: A Critical Science and/or a Critique of Science," in Moi, *The Kristeva Reader*, 87.

and influences in literature. Kristeva therefore explicitly dispensed with the term altogether in 1974 in *La Révolution du langage poétique* because many misunderstood it. Here intertextuality is the third of three semiotic processes, the first two being the Freudian concepts of condensation and displacement:

To these we must add a third 'process'—the *passage from one sign system to another*... The term *intertextuality* denotes this transposition of one (or several) sign-systems into another; but since this term has often been understood in the banal sense of 'study of sources', we prefer the term *transposition* because it specifies that the passage from one signifying system to another demands a new articulation of the thetic—of enunciative and denotative positionality.³⁵

Thus for Kristeva, intertextuality is not a method or perspective, not an option among others. Neither is it a call for renewed attention to the presence and role of sources in a more or less discrete literary work. It is a condition of all texts, written or otherwise. It undermines traditional notions of interpretation and is a tool for subverting traditional political orders. As Vincent Leitch writes, "In the late 1960s and early 1970s deconstructive theorists conceive *intertextuality* as something of a weapon to be used in the contemporary struggle over meaning and truth,"³⁶ not a pure method of investigation or property of particular works.

3.2.2 *From Politics to Play*

With the coining of the concept of intertextuality, the plowshare of literary theory became a political sword. Yet shortly after the term's coining, certain theorists seemed to step back from concerns for radical political change. Many came to realize that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander as well, and thus that the concepts of dialogicality, ambivalence and intertextuality subvert leftist political ideologies as well as conservative political ideologies. One sees this clearly in Barthes's *Le plaisir du texte*, written in 1973.³⁷ Two issues are particularly pertinent,

³⁵ Kristeva, *La révolution du langage poétique; l'avant-garde à la fin du XIX^e siècle, Lautréamont et Mallarmé* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1974); ET: *Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

³⁶ Vincent B. Leitch, *Deconstructive Criticism: An Advanced Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 161.

³⁷ Barthes, *Le plaisir du texte* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1973).

the first being the concept of *doxa* and *para-doxa*, the second being the concept of *jouissance*.

First, *The Pleasure of the Text* concerns *doxa* and *para-doxa*. For Barthes, *doxa* is common opinion, common sense, that which appears natural. *Para-doxa*, by contrast, is its antithesis, that which subverts what seems common and natural. What is crucial for the dissolution of the radical political ramifications of the concept of intertextuality is the recognition that, in the words of Graham Allen, "it is not just conservative, monological discourse which relies on the *doxa*; left-wing, even Marxist discourses have their own unquestionable signifieds."³⁸ Conservative positions are *doxa*, but "we are also dealing with Barthes' *doxa*" when "left-wing groups argue that society can only be changed by a revolution of the workers, or that all art which does not reflect working-class conditions is elitist[.]"³⁹

Second, Barthes draws a distinction between texts of pleasure (*plaisir*) and texts of bliss (*jouissance*). A text of pleasure is a "readerly" text, which "contents, fills, grants euphoria"; it "comes from culture and does not break with it" and "is linked to a *comfortable* practice of reading."⁴⁰ A text of bliss, by contrast, "imposes a state of loss... discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language."⁴¹ In other words, the text of bliss is a modernist text that concerns erotics, not politics.

Those concerned with the political implications of literature and interpretation, like Terry Eagleton, have descried and decried this abdication of radical politics. With characteristic sardonic flair, Eagleton argues that for the Barthes of *Le plaisir du texte*,

all theory, ideology, determinate meaning, social commitment have become, it appears, inherently terroristic, and 'writing' is the answer to them all. Writing, or reading-as-writing, is the last uncolonized enclave in which the intellectual can play, savouring the sumptuousness of the signifier in heady disregard of whatever might be going on in the Elysée palace or the Renault factories.⁴²

³⁸ Allen, *Intertextuality*, 91.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴⁰ Barthes, *Pleasure*, 14. Emphasis original.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 122.

Eagleton argues that Barthes's shift (and thus the concern for *para-doxa* and its apparent repudiation of politics) was "born of a specific political defeat and disillusion," namely the failure of the student movement in 1968.⁴³ The result of this political defeat, according to Eagleton, was a distrust of any and all overarching ideologies:

Unable to break the structures of state power, post-structuralism found it possible instead to subvert the structures of language... The student movement was flushed off the streets and driven underground into discourse. Its enemies, as for the later Barthes, became coherent belief-systems of any kind—in particular all forms of political theory and organization which sought to analyse, and act upon, the structures of society as a whole. For it was precisely such politics which seemed to have failed... All such total systematic thought was now suspect as terroristic: conceptual meaning itself, as opposed to libidinal gesture and anarchist spontaneity, was feared as repressive. Reading for the later Barthes is not cognition but erotic play.⁴⁴

In Eagleton's view, Anglo-American deconstruction has gone down this apolitical road of radical skepticism, and thus is "as injurious as blank ammunition."⁴⁵ This is miles away from Derrida's vision of deconstruction:

[T]he widespread opinion that deconstruction denies the existence of anything but discourse, or affirms a realm of pure difference in which all meaning and identity dissolves, is a travesty of Derrida's own work and of the most productive work which has followed from it.⁴⁶

3.2.3 *Criticism of the Use of Intertextuality in Biblical Studies*

Given the origins, development, meaning, intended function and implications of the term, one can readily see why scholars of both traditional and radical persuasions find limited, restricted versions of intertextuality used in service of the interpretation of specific texts problematic. Hans-Peter Mai writes that the theoretical consequences of certain attempts at restricting Kristeva's concept are "deplorable," lacking "the self-reflexive character of any (critical) intertextual procedure as demanded by Kristeva" and producing no results that would

⁴³ Ibid., 122–24.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 123.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 125–26.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 128. Eco also notes that Derrida is less concerned with the problematics of interpreting for sense and more with the philosophical issues of the metaphysics of presence (*Limits*, 33).

warrant the use of the term.⁴⁷ In their introduction to *Semeia* 69/70 (1995), dedicated to “Intertextuality and the Bible,” George Aichele and Gary Phillips emphasize that intertextuality “is not some neutral literary mechanism but is rather at root a means of ideological and cultural expression and of social transformation,” which makes “the narrow, conservative use of the term by certain biblical critics all the more ironic and ideologically contradictory.”⁴⁸

Scholars of more traditional persuasions also find the use of the term misguided. Noting that “all attempts at decoding intertexts run contrary to the originator’s use of the term,”⁴⁹ Thomas Hatina finds it peculiar that after only three decades “the term ‘intertextuality’ would eventually be adopted by the very group it was intended to dislodge[.]”⁵⁰ Given the radically different perspectives of poststructuralists and traditional biblical scholars, Hatina believes attempts at resolution to be “futile,” and asserts that at the very least “the term ‘intertextuality’ cannot simply be bandied about as a synonym for allusion without regard for its origin, its integrated theory of text, and its relationship to influence.”⁵¹ In critiquing certain Dutch uses of “intertextuality,”⁵² Martin Rese finds that it simply functions as a new term describing the old perspective of C. H. Dodd, “daß die expliziten Zitate als *pars pro toto* funktionieren,”⁵³ and has little patience for the use of the term:

⁴⁷ Mai, “Bypassing,” 45–46.

⁴⁸ Aichele and Phillips, “Introduction,” 9–10. Those “certain biblical critics” are explicitly Draisma, Buchanan, and Hays, who, in Aichele’s and Phillips’s view, “employ intertextuality (along with other theoretical concepts) as a restrictive tool for nailing down authorial intent and literary influence... Thinly veiled in such efforts are conservative ideological and theological interests in maintaining the primacy of certain (usually Christian) texts over against secondary (usually Jewish) precursors” (7). With reference to Hays and most of the essayists in the Draisma volume, this characterization is grossly unfair, a splenetic display resulting more from activist zeal than any serious attempt at academic engagement. Hays, for instance, was concerned to do precisely the opposite of what Aichele and Phillips accuse him of doing. One wonders if they actually read his book.

⁴⁹ Hatina, “Intertextuality,” 35.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 32–33.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁵² Wim Weren, *Intertextualiteit en bijbel* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1993); idem, “Psalm 2 in Luke-Acts: An Intertextual Study,” in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings*, ed. Sipke Draisma, 189–203; and J. Christiaan Bastiaens, *Interpretaties van Jesaja 53. Een Intertextueel onderzoek naar de lijdende Knecht in Jes 53 (MT/LXX) en in Lk 22:14–38, Hand 3:12–26, Hand 4:23–42 en Hand 8:26–40* (Tilburg: University Press, 1993).

⁵³ Martin Rese, “Intertextualität: ein Beispiel für Sinn und Unsinn ‘neuer’ Methoden,” in Tuckett, *The Scriptures in the Gospels*, 438.

So gesehen ist die praktische Anwendung von 'Intertextualität' im Zusammenhang mit der Frage nach der Verwendung der Schriften des Alten Testaments im Neuen Testament eher ein Beispiel für den Unsinn dieser neuen Methode als für ihren Sinn.⁵⁴

If scholars committed to such diverse hermeneutical perspectives agree, then perhaps the real issue lies elsewhere. The real issue concerns whether Kristeva and poststructuralists and deconstructionists are fundamentally correct. As Mai reminds us, "The basic disagreement about intertextuality is whether it is to be regarded as a general state of affairs textual or as an inherent quality of specific texts."⁵⁵

3.3 ECO AND INTERTEXTUALITY

While consistency may not be the first concern of the theoretically sophisticated, Kristeva herself sometimes works in ways that contradict her principles. Kristeva and her comrades in *Tel Quel* assert that Modernist literature introduces a social, political, and philosophical break, and that "[b]eginning with this break...the problem of intertextuality (intertextual dialogue) appears as such."⁵⁶ Elsewhere Kristeva writes, "Literary history since the end of the nineteenth century has given us modern texts which, even structurally, perceive themselves as a production that cannot be reduced to representation (Joyce, Mallarmé, Lautréamont, Roussel)."⁵⁷ One might say that all texts are intertextual, but some are more intertextual than others.

Further, in her own work Kristeva herself is guilty of hunting for sources, as Jonathan Culler has pointed out. He notes that Kristeva's attempt "to demonstrate the importance of intertextuality leads one to focus on the other discourses identifiable in and behind a discourse and to try to specify them," and that Lautréamont's *Poésies II* "practically imposes on the analyst a detailed study of the relationship between undeniable sources (usually in Pascal, Vauvenargues, or La Rochefoucauld) and disrespectful deformations."⁵⁸ Culler then trenchantly hoists Kristeva on her own petard:

⁵⁴ Ibid., 439.

⁵⁵ Mai, "Bypassing," 31.

⁵⁶ Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel," 42.

⁵⁷ Kristeva, "Semiotics," 86.

⁵⁸ Jonathan D. Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2002), 106.

Anyone thinking that the point of intertextuality is to take us beyond the study of identifiable sources is brought up short by Kristeva's observation that "in order to compare the presupposed text with the text of *Poésies II*, one needs to determine what editions of Pascal, Vauvenargues, and La Rochefoucauld Ducasse could have used, for the versions vary considerably from one edition to another." . . . [A] situation in which one can track down sources with such precision cannot serve as the paradigm for a description of intertextuality if intertextuality is the general discursive space that makes a text intelligible. Kristeva's procedure is instructive because it illustrates the way in which the concept of intertextuality leads the critic who wishes to work with it to concentrate on cases that put in question the general theory.⁵⁹

The real issue is whether poststructuralists are correct, whether deconstruction is true—as bizarre as such phrases sound in light of the assumptions and claims of poststructuralism and deconstruction—or, on the other hand, whether there are determinate things that could be said about a given written text, whether knowledge of specific cultural or literary intertexts help us understand something definitive about a text, whether the discursive space of a culture and its interaction with a given written text can be traced or must remain elusive.

In light of Eco's theory of interpretation, it is not surprising that he has in his more recent works strongly criticized certain trends in deconstructive, poststructuralist and reader-response theories of interpretation, which Kristeva's conception of intertextuality in large part precipitated. In Eco's view, the poststructuralists are not correct, and critical deconstruction is not true; the kind of passionate play advocated by the later Barthes and his associates ignores the real nature of cultural conventions concerning language.⁶⁰ Eco writes, "Some contemporary theories of criticism assert that the only reliable reading of a text is a misreading, that the only existence of a text is given by the chain of

⁵⁹ Ibid., 106–07, citing and translating Kristeva, *La révolution du langage poétique*, 343.

⁶⁰ As a self-described "'respectable' leftist" (Bondanella, *Umberto Eco and the Open Text*, 23), Eco, like Eagleton, is appreciative of the political relevance of deconstruction: "To affirm that a sign suffers the absence of its author and of its referent does not necessarily mean that it has no objective or literal linguistic meaning. But Derrida wants to establish a practice (which is philosophical more than critical) for challenging those texts that look as though dominated by the idea of a definite, final, and authorized meaning. He wants to challenge, more than the sense of a text, that metaphysics of presence both of an interpretation based on the idea of a final meaning [*sic*]. He wants to show the power of language and its ability to say more than it literally pretends to say" (*Limits*, 33). It is deconstruction as a purely critical practice that he finds misguided.

responses it elicits, and that... a text is only a picnic where the author brings the words and the readers bring the sense.”⁶¹ Eco finds fault with such contemporary theories: “Even if that were true, the words brought by the author are a rather embarrassing bunch of material evidences that the reader cannot pass over in silence, or in noise.”⁶² Interpreting texts involves discerning the nature of the text, the very intent of the text, composed of words and strings of words that have conventional meanings and functions. Thus, for Eco, the concept of intertextuality is no warrant for interpretive indeterminacy but, as we have seen in the above discussion of the Model Reader, a necessary component of textuality of which the Model Reader must take account in the process of interpretation.

Eco himself rarely uses the term “intertextuality,” which is somewhat surprising given his wide theoretical interests, the postmodern themes in his fiction, and his more recent critiques of certain critical practices. Further, one finds some apparent inconsistencies in Eco’s use of the term when he does mention it. Three issues are pertinent here. The first concerns the relationship of “the treasury of intertextuality”⁶³ to the encyclopedia. The second concerns the overlapping relationship between common and intertextual frames. The third concerns precisely how the Model Reader is to perceive discrete references to other texts.

First, Eco writes in *Role* that intertextual knowledge concerns “the extreme periphery of a semantic encyclopedia,”⁶⁴ but in *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* he suggests that intertextuality is a concept that approximates the encyclopedia.⁶⁵ Pellegrini thus observes:

Die notwendigste theoretische Erweiterung [of Eco’s model] ist die konzeptuelle Klärung des Verhältnisses zwischen Enzyklopädie und Intertext, denn die Verbreitung der Intertextualitätstheorie bedroht den Begriff Enzyklopädie oder stellt ihn zumindest in Frage.⁶⁶

For Eco, the concepts of encyclopedia and intertextuality are similar in form but different in function and implications. Both concern “the whole of the encyclopedic competence as the storage of that which is

⁶¹ Eco, “Interpretation and History,” 24.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Eco, *Role*, 21.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 187; see Pellegrini, *Elija*, 130.

⁶⁶ Pellegrini, *Elija*, 118.

already known and already organized by a culture.”⁶⁷ For poststructuralists, however, intertextuality implies the “infinite process of semiosis,”⁶⁸ in which links are indeterminate and indeterminable, where meaning is always deferred. For Eco, by contrast, a text is a particular instantiation of encyclopedic materials and thus arrests semiosis. One must decide “whether what is wanted is to have the semiosis function, or to interpret a text.”⁶⁹

Second, common and intertextual frames overlap. While Eco is not perfectly clear about their precise delineation, both their division and also their overlap are helpful. The overlap is helpful in that culture is taken as seriously as written literature; one can take seriously the presence of “texts” in cultures that may lie outside, behind, and within any discrete or canonical documents that we may possess. It recognizes that there is more going on with biblical interpretation than what is found in the canonical texts or even extracanonical texts, that these texts were closely bound up with certain Jewish and Christian communities on the ground, as it were. The distinction is helpful in that it recognizes that certain cultures have valued certain written works over others, and that that which is written cannot simply be reduced to cultural impulses.

Third, Eco’s concept of intertextual frames chiefly concerns genres, motifs, overcoded situations; that is, Eco’s concept concerns general literary *topoi* more than particular references to particular precursor texts. Eco does, however, have an interest in particular instances of intertextuality, and his encyclopedic knowledge of the Western intellectual tradition and modern culture makes him particularly skilled at unpacking allusions. One sees this in his discussion of the meaning of “Minucius Mandrake” in *Finnegan’s Wake*. “Minucius” was seen as a reference to the Church Father Minucius Felix, but “Mandrake” remained a mystery to Joyce’s interpreters, James Atherton chief among them. Eco writes:

Probably Atherton had not thought of the world of comic strips (a world which Joyce...knew very well through the daily comics in the newspapers of the time); otherwise he would have realized that Mandrake could be Mandrake the Magician, the famous character of Lee Falk and Phil Davis.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 187.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Eco, “Two Problems,” 44.

⁷⁰ Eco, *Role*, 70.

The possibility that this is a fruitful direction is strengthened when one considers that elsewhere in *Finnegan's Wake* Joyce "resorted to cartoon characters such as Mutt and Jeff,"⁷¹ and further by the conceptual similarities between Mandrake the Magician and Minucius Felix. Eco goes deeper into this excursion into particular intertextuality when he takes note of the chronology of Joyce's revisions:

The first version of the passage under consideration dates from 1924. In this version the name Mandrake does not appear. The reason seems simple enough: the comic strip character appeared for the first time in 1934. And, in fact, the aforementioned passage was revised and expanded between 1936 and 1939.⁷²

Eco goes deeper yet when examining the motivation for the linking of Minucius and Mandrake:

But why specifically Minucius and Mandrake? The comic strip itself supplies the key which allows us to give a new answer (which in turn reinforces our original hypothesis). Minucius is also called Felix. And Felix is another typical comic strip character, Pat Sullivan's cat, appearing in the daily comics from 1923 and thus probably known to Joyce.⁷³

Such an investigation of intertextual particulars is in keeping with Eco's concern for the "nature" and "properties" of a text and its historical location. Eco is quite skilled at unpacking such allusions and, as any one who has read *The Name of the Rose* or *Foucault's Pendulum* knows, also quite skilled at packing specific intertextual references into his own fiction.

On one hand, Eco's theory of the Model Reader is geared towards the identification of specific intertextual references, for it gives the interpreter a question to ask at any narrative node: should the Model Reader perceive an allusion here? Does the text require, intend it? Because texts are devices that actualize part of the encyclopedia, one can ask whether a given allusion is actualizing a component of the encyclopedia. The concepts of *intentio operis* and the Model Reader provide a possibility for the locus of allusion. A text may call not only for the actualization of a particular intertextual frame but also for a specific intertext—either a written text, such as a version of Gen 22, or aspects of its interpretation current in the cultural encyclopedia. On the other

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 71.

⁷³ Ibid., 72.

hand, Eco does not articulate specific principles for the identification of allusion, even though his investigation of the Mandrake affair is rich in implicit criteria.

3.4 CRITERIA FOR PERCEIVING INTERTEXTS

A text may intend the Model Reader to actualize specific intertextual references. The Model Reader notices potential nodes and makes inferential walks into the encyclopedia to determine if actualizing a piece of cultural knowledge helps make sense of the text. Pellegrini writes:

Der Unterschied zwischen Enzyklopädie und Intertextualität basiert auf der Abwesenheit oder Anwesenheit von Merkmalen, die andere textuelle Objekte als spezifische, *intendierte* Referenz erkennen lassen, die herangezogen werden muß, um eine Bedeutungserweiterung in den Text einzubringen. *Intertexte* sind also die Texte, die ein bestimmter Text aus der Gesamtencyklopädie als notwendigen Teil für seine Interpretation hervorhebt.⁷⁴

Such characteristics may include not only citations, but also allusions; both are forms of marking intertextual references. But how does one determine when an allusion is marked, is intended by the text? As Joseph Pucci reminds us, “students of allusion, regardless of critical stripe, have never been explicit about the criteria used in identifying an allusion.”⁷⁵ Revised in light of Eco’s model, I find no better set of criteria for working with biblical materials than those criteria proposed by the biblical scholar Richard Hays.⁷⁶

3.4.1 *Richard Hays’s Criteria and Echoes of Scripture*

In *Echoes*, Hays appropriates literary critic John Hollander’s concept of classical transumption or metalepsis,⁷⁷ which is “a device that requires

⁷⁴ Pellegrini, *Elija*, 131.

⁷⁵ Pucci, *The Full-Knowing Reader*, 32. A few thinkers who have suggested criteria include Ziva Ben-Porat, “The Poetics of Literary Allusion,” *Poetics and Theory of Literature* 1 (1976): 105–28; and Carmela Perri, “On Alluding,” *Poetics* 7 (1978): 289–307. See also Gian Biagio Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation: Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and other Latin Poets* (trans. Charles Segal; Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986). Pucci discusses these and other scholars’ approaches on pp. 14–26.

⁷⁶ Originally set forth in *Echoes*, 29–32; the criteria are presented again with further explanation and revision in Hays, “‘Who Has Believed Our Message?’ Paul’s Reading of Isaiah,” in *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 25–49.

⁷⁷ Hollander, *Figure of Echo*, 113–49.

the reader to interpret a citation or allusion by recalling aspects of the original context that are not explicitly quoted.”⁷⁸ It is important to observe that “[a]llusive echo functions to suggest to the reader that text B should be understood in light of a broad interplay with text A, encompassing aspects of A beyond those explicitly echoed.”⁷⁹ Hays seeks to examine the interplay between large swaths of Old Testament texts and the Pauline text in which the allusion is contained. A simple allusion of several words may evoke an entire Old Testament narrative and create significant intertextual echoes.

Hollander described echo as “a metaphor of, and for, alluding” that “does not depend on conscious intention.”⁸⁰ Hays likewise refrains from interpreting purely for authorial intention. Rather, he wishes to hold five theoretical possibilities for the locus of echo in “creative tension.”⁸¹ The possibilities are Paul’s mind; the original readers of the letter; the text itself; any reader’s experience; and a contemporary community.⁸² Hays then presents his seven criteria for the detection of echoes, which he considers “rules of thumb,” not a strict method,⁸³ and one can readily see how the various loci come into play in various criteria:

Availability asks, quite simply, whether the proposed source of the echo was available to the author and the original audience.

Volume “is determined primarily by the degree of explicit repetition of words or syntactical patterns.”⁸⁴ Volume is also determined by “the distinctiveness, prominence, or popular familiarity of the precursor text”⁸⁵ and “the rhetorical stress placed upon the phrase(s) in question, both within the precursor text and in Paul’s discourse...we must consider not only the degree of exact verbal correspondence but also the relative weightiness of the material cited.”⁸⁶

Recurrence or *Clustering* inquires after the frequency of Paul’s citation or allusion to a particular passage. “When we find repeated Pauline

⁷⁸ Hays, “Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul: Abstract,” in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders; JSNTSup 83; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 43.

⁷⁹ Hays, *Echoes*, 20.

⁸⁰ Hollander, *Figure of Echo*, 64. Cited by Hays, *Echoes*, 29.

⁸¹ Hays, *Echoes*, 27.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 26–27.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 29–32.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁸⁵ Hays, “‘Who Has Believed Our Message?’” 36. Emphasis original.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

quotations of a particular Old Testament passage, additional possible allusions to the same passage become more compelling.”⁸⁷

Thematic Coherence asks how consonant a potential echo is with Paul’s argument. “This test begins to move beyond simple identification of echoes to the problem of how to interpret them.”⁸⁸

Historical Plausibility asks whether Paul could have intended an echo and whether his readers could have comprehended it. “This test, historical in character, necessarily requires hypothetical constructs of what might have been intended and grasped by particular first-century figures.”⁸⁹ This guards against anachronistic readings of Paul, but “should not necessarily function as a negative constraint, because Paul was no doubt a reasonably original thinker who was capable of formulating fresh echoes and unprecedented readings.”⁹⁰

History of Interpretation asks if other readers throughout history have found the same allusions. It is somewhat unreliable, however, since Christians early on “lost Paul’s sense of urgency about relating the gospel to God’s dealings with Israel, and, slightly later, began reading Paul’s letters within the interpretive matrix of the New Testament canon.”⁹¹ Therefore this criterion ought not rule out readings that make good sense for other reasons.

Satisfaction is both the “most important”⁹² criterion but also “elusive,”⁹³ for it involves the contemporary community. It asks simply, on one hand, whether the proposed reading makes sense and sheds light on the surrounding discourse. It also asks, on the other hand, “whether the proposed reading offers a good account of the experience of a contemporary community of competent readers.”⁹⁴ It is akin to thematic coherence but asks more broadly about the document or corpus as a whole.

⁸⁷ Ibid. Emphasis original.

⁸⁸ Hays, *Echoes*, 31.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 30.

⁹⁰ Hays, “‘Who Has Believed Our Message?’” 41.

⁹¹ Hays, *Echoes*, 31.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Hays, “‘Who Has Believed Our Message?’” 44.

⁹⁴ Hays, *Echoes*, 32.

Much research into the “New Testament use of the Old Testament” implicitly assumes that Old Testament texts have a relatively stable, patent meaning, and this meaning is in view when used by New Testament authors. C. H. Dodd,⁹⁵ Barnabas Lindars,⁹⁶ and Hays are examples of this approach. Hays states:

Paul repeatedly situates his discourse within the symbolic field created by a *single great textual precursor: Israel’s Scripture*... The vocabulary and cadences of Scripture—particularly of the LXX—are imprinted deeply on Paul’s mind, and *the great stories of Israel* continue to serve for him as a fund of symbols and metaphors that condition his perception of the world, of God’s promised deliverance of his people, and of his own identity and calling. His faith, in short, is one whose articulation is inevitably intertextual in character, and Israel’s Scripture is the “determinative subtext that plays a constitutive role” in shaping his literary production.⁹⁷

Hays thus downplays the fields of tradition and interpretation that lie between Israel’s Scripture and Paul’s use of that Scripture, believing that the scholarly attention paid to postbiblical traditions and exegetical practices has yielded little fruit with regard to Paul, especially given the nebulous understanding and use of the term “midrash.”⁹⁸

In effect, Hays’s approach does not thus fully consider the possibility that an allusion to an Old Testament text could be an allusion to a radical interpretation thereof. This is problematic, for the semiotic matrix within which the New Testament writers lived and moved and had their being was not merely Scripture *qua* Scripture, but rather the entire cultural encyclopedia of early Judaism in all its diversity, within which Old Testament Scripture was interpreted. Theoretically, even if texts have meaning in and of themselves, or even if meaning ultimately resides in an author, meaning cannot exist for a reader apart from that reader’s interpretation. The historical situation itself demonstrates this theoretical observation, for the Jewish tradition is replete with instances of interpretation that radically diverge from the ostensible plain meanings of their corresponding biblical bases. As Don Juel noted in *Messianic Exegesis*, the rules of the exegetical game—and

⁹⁵ C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-Structure of New Testament Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1953).

⁹⁶ Barnabas Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic* (London: SCM, 1961).

⁹⁷ Hays, *Echoes*, 15–16, citing Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 50. Emphases mine.

⁹⁸ Hays, *Echoes*, 10–14.

therefore exegetical “results”—were much different in the 1st century C.E. than they are today.⁹⁹

Hays uses “allusion” and “echo” interchangeably, due to his eclectic combination of various possibilities for the locus of allusion/echo. As Hays notes, however, “allusion” really has more to do with conscious intent and precise verbal affinity, whereas “echo” has to do with fainter resonances that may or may not have been intended.¹⁰⁰ Thus, Hays generally uses “allusion” for “obvious intertextual references,” and the term “echoes” for those that are subtler.¹⁰¹ It is a distinction of degree. I, however, would propose a distinction of kind: *The term “allusion” should refer to the verbal, syntactic links between texts, and the term “echo” should refer to that which the Model Reader is to produce by means of that verbal allusion, the effect created by the allusion in the Model Reader’s act of reading.* When the Gospel of Matthew alludes to Gen 22, what echo is to be heard thereby? An echo of the text itself, or an echo of an aspect of the Akedah? As Craig Evans noted in discussing Hays’s work, “...it would be more accurate to listen for echoes of interpreted Scripture, and not just for echoes of Scripture itself.”¹⁰²

Hays’s methodology may work well for the investigation of Paul, who may have read Scripture at face value as a coherent narrative¹⁰³ and made little use of postbiblical interpretative traditions. For the Gospel of Matthew, however, the situation is different. James A. Sanders notes,

One must often rummage around in the Targums, midrashim, and Jewish commentaries to learn how a passage of Scripture functioned for Matthew. He was sometimes dependent on a particular interpretation or understanding of a passage of Scripture: indeed, he would have had that interpretation in mind even as he read or cited a text.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ See Donald Juel, “The Rules of the Game: Biblical Interpretation in the First Century C.E.,” chapter 2 of *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 31–57.

¹⁰⁰ Hays, *Echoes*, 29.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Craig A. Evans, “Listening for Echoes of Interpreted Scripture,” in Evans and Sanders, *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, 51.

¹⁰³ Hays writes, “I believe that Paul had read and pondered the scroll of Isaiah as a whole...and developed a sustained reading of it as God’s revelation of ‘the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith’ (Romans 16.25–6)” (“Who Has Believed Our Message?” 27). Emphasis mine.

¹⁰⁴ James A. Sanders, “Isaiah in Luke,” in *Luke and Scripture* (ed. James A. Sanders and Craig A. Evans; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 16.

In light of Eco's model, the overarching hermeneutical framework and the criteria themselves can be fruitfully reworked. Instead of holding the five loci in creative tension, it is better to speak of the intent of the text and the Model Reader. Instead of seeing the Bible itself (for Hays's project, Paul's LXX) as the precursor text, it is better to envision cultural materials from the whole of the Jewish cultural encyclopedia with all its Bibles, traditions, and texts as possible referents of allusions. Hays's criteria can help us listen for echoes not only to biblical texts but also to postbiblical traditions of interpretation attached to those texts. This does not mean that the Matthean text alludes directly to discrete, extant documents such as 4 Maccabees or 4Q225. It does mean, however, that allusions to Gen 22 may produce echoes of aspects of interpretations of the Akedah current in Jewish culture, for which we have evidence in documents such as 4 Maccabees and 4Q225.

3.4.2 *Hays's Criteria Revised: Echoes of Scripture and Tradition*

I would propose, then, that Hays's criteria should be revamped in the following ways:

Availability can no longer be taken for granted but is now the decisive criterion. Which facets of the Akedah were present in the Jewish encyclopedia at the time of the composition of the Gospel of Matthew? Was the concept of a willing, active Isaac available? Was Isaac's deed understood as salvific in some sense prior to its composition? Here we come upon the difficult but necessary historical task of reconstructing a small part of the ancient Jewish encyclopedia potentially relevant for the Gospel of Matthew.

Volume retains its importance, but perceived syntactic similarities to a proposed Old Testament text must be evaluated not solely on the basis of its coherence with the putative content of the precursor text itself but also in light of possible coherence with traditions of interpretation attached to that text in the Jewish encyclopedia. Further, the significance of the "precursor text" is to be judged not only in terms of the prominence of the text itself within Scripture but by the prominence of the traditions of interpretation attached to it. (Of course, we often determine the importance of an Old Testament text precisely by means of its significance in Jewish interpretive tradition.)

Recurrence or *Clustering* is expanded to include allusions to postbiblical traditions. If we can conclude that there are allusions to traditions of the

Akedah in the Gethsemane and arrest sequence, we may be more certain that such is the case in other, less certain passages, such as the baptism or transfiguration. Note that this involves a coherent, holistic view of a Gospel; since redaction criticism largely ignores narrative factors, the principle of recurrence or clustering is seldom taken seriously.

Thematic Coherence helps confirm perceived syntactic allusions. It must include extrabiblical traditions under its purview. Most commentators can make no sense of potential references to Isaac in the Gospels precisely because they do not take extrabiblical traditions of the Akedah fully into consideration. It is also important to note here that different facets of an interpretive tradition such as the Akedah develop over time. Thus, an allusion to Gen 22 in Matthew could produce echoes of *a single aspect* of the Akedah present in the encyclopedia; that certain aspects developed later in the tradition does not mean that other aspects were not available earlier. Further, the text can actualize one particular aspect without actualizing others.

Historical Plausibility becomes more important. It implicitly acknowledges the role and importance of the Jewish cultural encyclopedia, for it explicitly considers “what might have been intended and grasped by particular first-century [C.E.] figures.”¹⁰⁵ It recognizes the particular historical location in which the New Testament texts were produced and read, and thus necessitates the inclusion of traditions of interpretation attached to the biblical texts. Since it concerns the presence of traditions in the encyclopedia, it is now intimately connected to availability.

History of Interpretation remains a most helpful guide but is not ultimately decisive. In the same way that early Christian interpreters may have lost Paul’s sense of urgency about relating the gospel to Israel, many may have lacked the intimate knowledge of Jewish traditions of interpretation likely familiar to many New Testament writers. Thus, the import of Hays’s judgment with regard to Paul stands with regard to the possibility of the presence of Isaac in various passages in the Gospel of Matthew: “this criterion should rarely be used as a negative test to exclude proposed echoes that commend themselves on other grounds.”¹⁰⁶ That said, many Fathers see connections between Isaac

¹⁰⁵ Hays, *Echoes*, 30–31.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

and Jesus that prove fruitful for the interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew, as examined in the excursus below.

Satisfaction. This criterion still concerns the sense of the whole. Given its broad scope and generality, we may move into the realm of questions concerning general typological relationships and narrative coherence. Does the Matthean presentation of Jesus require a typological model, particularly that of Isaac? Does the intertextual frame of the ready martyr, of which Isaac is the paradigmatic example, support underlying narrative coherence? Might the Akedah help smooth the narrative transition and Christological relationship between Jesus the teacher and Jesus the God-ordained sacrifice?

Excursus: History of Interpretation and the Figure of Isaac in the Fathers

Many church fathers see significant typological connections between Jesus and Isaac, which may render allusions to Isaac in the Gospel of Matthew more plausible. While the Fathers do not simply repeat the raw substance of what Jewish tradents wrote and said about Isaac, given the mutual interest Jewish tradents and the Fathers had in the figure of Isaac and their oft shared understandings of him, it may make good sense to see the Gospel of Matthew (as well as other New Testament documents and early Christianity in general) as standing in the middle of a continuous if ebbing, flowing and changing stream of tradition from pre-Christian Judaism into the patristic period (and indeed, into the middle ages). Put differently, given the religious, cultural and interpretive continuities shared among early Jewish and early Christian interpreters, particularly for our present purposes regarding the figure of Isaac, we should not be surprised to find the figure of Isaac playing a significant role in the Gospel of Matthew. The role of Isaac in the Gospel of Matthew stands in continuity between Jewish and patristic understandings of Isaac.

The perception of radical discontinuity, however, between Judaism and patristic interpretation on one hand and the Bible itself on the other has often been a hallmark of modern scholarship, probably owing to latent anti-Judaism and anti-Catholicism.¹⁰⁷ Interpreters of the New

¹⁰⁷ One thinks here of Benjamin Jowett's famous essay, "On the Interpretation of Scripture," in *Essays and Reviews* (ed. Frederick Temple, et al.; London: John W. Parker & Son, 1860), 330–433.

Testament have labored for many years within and under a modernist, Enlightenment paradigm, which, like the Protestantism that had a large part in birthing and nurturing it, makes a hard and fast split between Scripture on one hand and early Christian interpretation on the other. Thus, readings evinced in the Fathers are often ruled out of court *a priori*. Is it so impossible, however, that there are actually significant continuities between Jewish tradents, the New Testament writers (Jews themselves!) and the Fathers of the Church? For all its differences with its parent body, Christianity is a fully Jewish phenomenon. Is it therefore so impossible that the Gospel of Matthew presents the first instance in Christian interpretation of the broad typological parallels between Abraham, Sarah and Isaac on the one hand and God, Mary and Jesus on the other?

Here a brief discussion of patristic treatments of Isaac is in order. While few Church Fathers hear echoes of Isaac in the precise Matthean locations under discussion in the present project, their reflections on the figure of Isaac and Gen 22 can nevertheless be helpful. The Fathers can help us modern interpreters of the New Testament by focusing our imaginative horizons, by helping us conceive of possibilities we may not otherwise consider. When considering potential typological connections between Old Testament and New Testament figures, the Fathers thought largely in terms of thematic correspondence, not precise verbal links. They did not necessarily hunt for syntactic correspondence between discrete passages as modern interpreters do. For instance, no early Christian exegete commenting on Matt 1:18–25 mentions the conspicuous and extensive syntactic allusion to Gen 17:19 LXX. Certain Fathers do, however, find and exploit the significant thematic parallels between the situations of barren Sarah and the Virgin Mary and thus between the promised children of Isaac and Jesus, parallels generally presented and discussed in contexts apart from examinations of the Gospel of Matthew.¹⁰⁸ The Fathers considered all of Scripture one coherent body, one coherent narrative, one coherent matrix, one coherent mosaic, and thus would have regarded an observation made about Mary and Sarah in the course of, say, a hymn or a commentary on Luke or Genesis valid and true with reference to the Gospel of

¹⁰⁸ We will examine these typological connections between Sarah and the Virgin Mary and thus between Isaac and Jesus below *ad locum* in chapter 6, pp. 144–51. In the present chapter we will concern ourselves with examining parallels the Fathers find between the adult Isaac and Jesus.

Matthew. Patristic observations may not have been made with specific reference to the Gospel, but they do help us consider the possibility that the evangelist himself may in fact have been the first Christian to note and exploit the thematic parallels, drawing them to the attention of his readers and hearers through the mechanism of allusion.

In certain sections of the present project, then, patristic materials will find mention, while in others it will not. Again, the criterion of the history of interpretation is not meant to exclude readings that appear plausible on other grounds.

That said, how do the Fathers treat Gen 22 and the figure of Isaac?¹⁰⁹ In general, while the Fathers concentrate on and defend the conduct of Abraham, not Isaac, they do find and exploit significant typological correspondence between Abraham and Isaac on one hand and God and Jesus Christ on the other, precisely the broad parallel the Gospel of Matthew evinces, without presenting an explicitly active and heroic Isaac of the sort found in Jewish literature such as Josephus' presentation of the Akedah in the *Antiquities*. For instance, *Ep. Barn.* 7.3 states, "[The Lord] himself was about to offer the vessel of the Spirit as a sacrifice for our own sins, that the type might also be fulfilled that was set forth in Isaac, when he was offered upon the altar."¹¹⁰ Clement of Alexandria observes the typological parallels between Abraham and Isaac on one hand and God and Jesus on the other:

Isaac... is a type of the Lord, a child just as the Son; for he was the son of Abraham as Christ is the Son of God. He was a sacrificial victim as was the Lord. Yet he was not sacrificed as the Lord. Isaac did at least carry the wood of the sacrifice, as the Lord carried the wood of the cross.¹¹¹

Cyril of Alexandria also notes the parallels:

The child being led to the sacrifice by his father indicates through symbol and outline that neither human strength nor the greed of the conspirators led our Lord Jesus Christ to the cross, but the desire of the Father.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Here Edward Kessler's monograph *Bound by the Bible: Jews, Christians and the Sacrifice of Isaac* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) is of immense help.

¹¹⁰ ἵνα καὶ ὁ τύπος ὁ γενόμενος ἐπὶ Ἰσαὰκ τοῦ προσενεχθέντος ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον τελεσθῇ (trans. Ehrman, LCL).

¹¹¹ *Paed.* 1.5.23, trans. Kessler, *Bound by the Bible*, 112; the text is found in Henri Marrou and Marguerite Harl, eds., *Le Pedagogue I* (SC 70; Paris: Cerf, 1960).

¹¹² *Paschal Homily* 5, cited and trans. Kessler, *Bound by the Bible*, 67.

Augustine also sees in Isaac's wood a type of Christ's cross. In discussing Heb 11:17–19 and Rom 8:32, Augustine says, "This is why, as the Lord carried his cross, so Isaac himself carried to the place of sacrifice the wood on which he too was to be placed."¹¹³ He also asserts that the ram and its immolation are types of Christ's sacrifice.¹¹⁴

Irenaeus draws the parallels as well, Edward Kessler suggesting that we here also find the concept of *zecut avot*:

For Abraham, according to his faith, followed the command of the Word of God, and with a ready mind delivered up, as a sacrifice to God, his only-begotten and beloved son (τόν ἴδιον μονογενῆ καὶ ἀγαπητόν), in order that God also might be pleased to offer up for all his seed His own beloved and only-begotten Son (ὁ θεὸς εὐδοκήσῃ...τόν ἴδιον μονογενῆ καὶ ἀγαπητόν), as a sacrifice for our redemption.¹¹⁵

John Chrysostom presents the typology and (quite significant for the present study) links it to the heavenly voice of the baptism (Matt 3:17):

All this, however, happened as a type of the Cross. Hence Christ too said of the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was delighted" [John 8:56]. How did he see it if he lived so long before? In type, in shadow: just as in our text the sheep was offered in place of Isaac, so here the rational lamb was offered for the world. You see, it was necessary that the truth be sketched out ahead of time in shadow: an only-begotten son in that case, an only-begotten in this; dearly loved in that

¹¹³ Civ. 16.32 (trans. Henry Bettenson, *City of God* [Penguin Classics; New York: Penguin, 2003], 694). In his hymn *Lauda, Zion*, written for the feast of Corpus Christi, Thomas Aquinas also sees Christ's sacrifice prefigured in Isaac's: *In figuris praesignatur/cum Isaac immolatur/agnus Paschae deputatur/datur manna patribus*. Further, Aquinas links Gen 22:7, John 1:29 and Rom 8:32 in his *Commentary on Saint John*. See Matthew Levering, *Sacrifice and Community: Jewish Offering and Christian Eucharist* (Illuminations: Theory & Religion; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2005), 31.

¹¹⁴ Civ. 16.32. Augustine also mentions the concept of resurrection in this context, making moves rabbinic interpreters made: "Abraham is to be praised in that he believed, without hesitation, that his son would rise again when he had been sacrificed. [...] The devout father therefore clung to this promise faithfully, and since it had to be fulfilled through the son whom God ordered to be slain, he did not doubt that a son who could be granted to him when he had ceased to hope could also be restored to him after he had been sacrificed" (trans. Bettenson, *City of God*, 694).

¹¹⁵ Adv. Haer. 4.5.4b, trans. Rambaut, ANF 1:467. Kessler downplays the typological parallels, believing such a reading is incompatible with *zecut avot*: "It is difficult to view the interpretation of Irenaeus typologically because it does not compare the actions of Abraham with those of God. Rather, Abraham was rewarded for his response to God's command by God's willingness to give up his Son" (68). To the contrary, the parallelism seems obvious and thus compatible with *zecut avot*.

case, dearly loved in this. "This is my beloved son," Scripture says, in fact, "in whom I have found satisfaction" [Matt 3:17]. The former was offered as a burnt offering by his Father, and the latter his Father surrendered.¹¹⁶

While Isaac is often presented as a type of Christ, the Fathers generally refrain from emphasizing his role, probably for the sake of the typological presentation of Christ as the supreme and decisive sacrifice.¹¹⁷ Consider the words of Ps.-Gregory of Nyssa:

It suffices for you [Abraham] that you have been honoured by being the type (τύπος τῷ πατρὶ). I have an only born son who is beloved. This one will live in the world; this one will be sacrificed on behalf of the world. Your son having awaited the slaughter was of no profit to the world, patriarch; the slaughter of My only born Son will be the salvation of the world.¹¹⁸

Certain Fathers do, however, interpret Gen 22 in ways that not only envision typological correspondence between Abraham and Isaac on one hand and God and Jesus on the other, but also revise and emphasize Isaac's role in an implicit and suggestive manner. For instance, Melito of Sardis finds contrasts but also significant parallels between the figures of Isaac and Jesus:¹¹⁹

...and he ["our Lord Jesus Christ"] carried the wood on his shoulders as he was led up to be slain like Isaac by his Father.
But Christ suffered, whereas Isaac did not suffer;
for he was a model of the Christ who was going to suffer.
But by being merely the model of Christ
he caused astonishment and fear among men.
For it was a strange mystery to behold,
a son led by his father to a mountain for slaughter,
whose feet he bound and whom he put on the wood of the offering
preparing with zeal the things for his slaughter.

¹¹⁶ *Hom. Gen. 47.14* (trans. Robert C. Hill, *Saint John Chrysostom: Homilies on Genesis 46–67* [FC 87; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1992], 21–22).

¹¹⁷ Kessler writes, "Typology, then, was a reason why the church fathers viewed Isaac as a child. He represented an outline, an immature image of what lay ahead. The child (Isaac) was to be fulfilled by the adult (Christ). The rabbis, on the other hand, maintained that Isaac was an adult. His action was not to be interpreted in the light of any later event but had significance in its own right" (*Bound by the Bible*, 113). Typological connections need not be perfect and equal in all parallels. Here we have a typology of lesser and greater; in the case of Paul's treatment of Adam and Christ (Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:21–22, 45) we have what may be called an "inverted" typology.

¹¹⁸ *In Abrahamo*, in *S. Ephraem Syri Opera* (ed. Silvio Mercati; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1915), cited and trans. Kessler, *Bound by the Bible*, 66.

¹¹⁹ See Kessler, *Bound by the Bible*, 109–11.

But Isaac was silent, bound like a ram,
 not opening his mouth nor uttering a sound.
 For not frightened by the sword
 nor alarmed at the fire
 nor sorrowful at the suffering,
 he carried with fortitude the model of the Lord.¹²⁰

Although Isaac did not suffer, he was nevertheless the τύπος of Christ in several significant respects: both carry the wood of their offerings as they are led to their sacrifices by their respective fathers and, most importantly, the silence of both figures betrays not ignorance of their situations but their courage. Thus, while Melito does not present an Isaac who explicitly consents to the sacrifice, he does present an Isaac who is obedient to his father, ready and resolved to endure his sacrifice.

Other Fathers explicitly emphasize Isaac's obedience to an even greater degree. John Chrysostom asks rhetorically:

What amazes and astounds me more—the valorous attitude of the patriarch or the obedience of the son? or the fact that, far from shrinking back or protesting against the deed, he submitted and yielded to what was being done by his father, and, like lamb, lay on the altar without resistance, awaiting his father's arm?¹²¹

So too Gregory of Nyssa:

At which of the two should I be more amazed? The one who throws his hand upon his son for the love of God or the one who obeys his father unto death? They strive for honour with each other: one lifting himself above nature; the other reckoning that disobedience towards his father was more difficult than death.¹²²

In summary, the Fathers do see intriguing parallels between Abraham and Isaac on one hand and God the Father and Jesus Christ on the other. Just as Abraham the father would have sacrificed his willing and obedient beloved son, so did God the Father indeed sacrifice his willing and obedient beloved Son, precisely the broad thematic parallel that the Gospel of Matthew presents. To be sure, the Fathers generally do not present Isaac in the heroic manner which we find in many Jewish

¹²⁰ Fragment 9 (ed. and trans. Stuart G. Hall, *Melito of Sardis: On Pascha and Fragments* [OECT; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979], 74–75; cited also by Kessler, *Bound by the Bible*, 110).

¹²¹ *Hom. Gen.* 47.10 [= PG 54:431], trans. Hill. Cited also Kessler, *Bound by the Bible*, 126.

¹²² *Deit.* PG 46.572B, trans. Kessler, *Bound by the Bible*, 126.

texts, which would in some ways strengthen the precise parallels between Isaac and Jesus, probably because they were concerned to present Jesus Christ as superior to Isaac. Nevertheless, in certain patristic presentations we do find an explicitly active, willing, obedient Isaac.

These criteria provide no foolproof method for determining the presence and function of allusions and echoes. They provide, rather, extremely helpful heuristic tools for investigating potential allusions and echoes in the realm of New Testament studies. At certain times I will refer to them explicitly; at all times they are operating behind the scenes of the present investigation.

3.5 SUMMARY

In brief, Eco's theory of the Model Reader concerns the dynamic relation between the encyclopedia as the storehouse of all culturally conventionalized knowledge and a text as a given instantiation thereof. The encyclopedia is infinite, but a text is a particular limitation of the encyclopedia. The model is helpful for Gospel studies for several reasons:

First, Eco's concept of the encyclopedia complements many recent trends in Gospel scholarship, particularly social-scientific criticism and research into the use of Old Testament texts and traditions in the Gospels. The idea of the encyclopedia as the totality of a culture's knowledge prevents us from assigning undue influence to the form of the Hebrew-based Protestant canon of the Old Testament when we explore citations, allusions, and typologies; it makes room for legends and traditions operative in early Judaism that are not found in the MT version of the Old Testament. The MT tradition of the Old Testament was part of the ancient Jewish cultural encyclopedia—but only a part. That encyclopedia comprised not only “the” Old Testament text but other Old Testament texts and traditions of interpretation not found in what modern Jews or Christians consider canonical texts. As the storehouse of a culture's knowledge, an encyclopedia has a particular social location, and thus demands rigorous historical investigation.¹²³

Second, it sets the text itself squarely in the center of study. By speaking of the intention of the text, Eco's semiotic model guarantees that one will not go behind the signs of the text too quickly in search of

¹²³ Alkier, “Intertextualität,” 26.

an evangelist's intention and ignore the narrative dynamics of the text itself. In recent decades literary-critical approaches of various stripes have shown that one can read the Gospels fruitfully as narratives; consequently, to talk about the intention of a Gospel's text and the role of its Model Reader is not to impose a method on the Gospels that is foreign to their nature but rather to employ a procedure that is much more commensurate with their constitution than redaction criticism.¹²⁴

Third, being rooted in history and taking every facet of the text into account, Eco's model permits historical reconstruction. Eco often makes a necessary distinction between interpretation and use. Interpretation concerns what parts of the encyclopedia the text actualizes. Use concerns any other use of the text. Eco repeatedly stresses that to use a text is a perfectly legitimate enterprise, but it is requisite to keep the horse of interpretation before the cart of use, as it were. One cannot use a text or understand others' use of it until one has a fundamental grasp of the literal sense:

To defend the rights of interpretation against the mere use of a text does not mean that texts must never be used. We are using texts every day and we need to do so, for many respectable reasons. It is only important to distinguish use from interpretation. A critical reader could also say why certain texts have been used in a certain way, finding in their structure the reasons for their use or misuse.¹²⁵

With Eco's model, it is indeed possible to do historical reconstruction, if one uses the text for that purpose. But the empirical author must be bracketed until the text has been interpreted. The poetic function must precede the referential function.

As Stanton and others have noted, the evangelist is responsible for all that is written, not simply seams, changes, omissions, and additions to prior material.¹²⁶ Redaction critics, however, have too often

¹²⁴ Again, Burridge's thesis that the Gospels are best understood as ancient *bioi*—which is gaining wide acceptance among Gospel scholars—is of decisive importance. If the Gospels belong within the genre of Greco-Roman biography, then they intend the reader to focus on Jesus their subject, not on a surreptitious story of a later community in conflict. As such, narrative ways of reading will prove more fruitful than redaction criticism.

¹²⁵ Eco, *Limits*, 62.

¹²⁶ Stanton, "Redaction Criticism," 41–42, 52; and Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 7. Rhoads notes, "Matthew's free editorial hand... could have omitted any part of Mark; as such, the author of Matthew may have kept parts of Mark precisely because they served his purposes every bit as much as the redactions" ("Narrative Criticism: Practices and Prospects," in *Characterization in the Gospels: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism*

ignored most of the text as it is written and focus on seams, changes, omissions, and additions where they believe they can find the firmest anchor for the evangelist's dominant concerns. Thus, much of what an evangelist actually wrote down is omitted from the sphere of relevance. Eco's model, by first focusing on the lexematic surface of the linear manifestation of the text, avoids this pitfall. One may read for authorial intention, but only after taking note of all that the author actually put on the papyrus, as it were. Again, one must thoroughly explore and exhaust the poetic function before concerning oneself with the referential function. Instead of using perceived redactional features to find the author's meaning of the text behind the text, it makes more sense to find the meaning of the entire text itself as a speech act within its particular cultural encyclopedia, and ascribe that meaning to the author. Eco himself approves of speech-act theory, and in one place explicitly states that a text is a "macro-speech act."¹²⁷ Further, in Eco's model the Model Reader cooperates with the Model Author, and the Model Author bears a relationship to the empirical author. As Jack D. Kingsbury puts it, the world of the story could be an index of the world of the evangelist and the implied reader an index of the intended readers.¹²⁸

One must move from text to author, not author to text. After starting with and thoroughly explicating the intent of the text, however, one could move to more traditional questions: why would an evangelist compose such a narrative and tell such a story? What conflicts might lie behind it, if any? How does its theology and ideology compare with that of Paul? What might we learn about the history of the early church? All such questions are legitimate, but they concern *use*, not *interpretation*, and depend wholly on the interpretation of the text. The direction of the process is decisive. Interpretation precedes use; text precedes author and hypothetical historical reconstruction. As Kingsbury writes:

[ed. David M. Rhoads and Kari Syreeni; JSNTSup 184; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], 267).

¹²⁷ Eco writes, "In other words, the Model Reader is a textually established set of felicity conditions (Austin 1962) to be met in order to have a macro-speech act (such as a text is) fully actualized" (*Role*, 11). In critiquing Todorov's notion of the readers bringing the sense to the author's words in his Tanner lectures recorded in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, Eco coyly endorsed Austin, remarking, "If I remember correctly, it was here in Britain that somebody suggested, years ago, that it is possible to do things with words" ("Interpretation and History," 24).

¹²⁸ Jack Dean Kingsbury, "Reflections on 'the Reader' of Matthew's Gospel," *NTS* 34 (1988): 459.

Once one fully understands the ‘world of the story’, one can then move to a reconstruction of the ‘world of the evangelist’... In any event, it is not too much to say that as preparation for the task of historical reconstruction, thorough familiarity with both the world of the story and the ‘implied reader’ would seem to commend itself as well-nigh indispensable.¹²⁹

Such reconstruction, however, is fraught with difficulty; an evangelist may have written for exactly the opposite of a seemingly obvious reason. For instance: was the Gospel of Mark written to encourage suffering Christians, or is the Markan picture so stark for the purpose of shocking complacent believers? Are the hostile polemics found in the Gospel of Matthew evidence for a conflict with his community’s Jewish parent body, or, perhaps, is that hostility perhaps directed to Christian believers who are too accommodating to the parent body?¹³⁰ A historical reconstruction must never be substituted for the sense made in the interpretation of a text; it can only depend on the text.

In this chapter and the prior, we have dealt with three reasons scholars neglect the Akedah in the Gospel of Matthew by appropriating Eco’s theory as a corrective. The Matthean Model Reader’s focus on the *intentio operis* ensures that one takes full account of the narrative dynamics of the Gospel and thus the cumulative force of allusions, while the concept of the cultural encyclopedia breaks the boundaries of the MT canon and necessitates the consideration of extrabiblical texts and traditions. We will deal with the definition and dating of various aspects of the tradition of the Akedah in the following chapter, seeking to establish which aspects were present in the cultural encyclopedia within which the Gospel of Matthew was first composed and received.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Consider the case of John Chrysostom: as Rodney Stark writes, “But rather than dismiss Chrysostom as merely a raving bigot or as an unscrupulous manipulator of Jewish scapegoats, why not see him as an early leader in the movement to *separate* a church and synagogue that were still greatly intertwined?” (*The Rise of Christianity* [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997], 66; emphasis original). See also Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE AKEDAH PRIOR TO THE COMMON ERA

4.1 THE AKEDAH: DEBATES, DISTORTIONS, DEFINITIONS AND DATING

I have argued that many scholars neglect the role of the Akedah in the Gospel of Matthew due to a tacit understanding of the MT version of the Old Testament as an ideal dictionary. A better model is the encyclopedia, for it takes account not only of canonical texts but also of traditions of interpretation attached to those texts as witnessed to by extracanonical texts. This chapter will present various aspects of the Akedah with cultural currency in the early Jewish encyclopedia found in texts dated prior to the Common Era relevant to the interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew, while the subsequent chapter will deal with texts from the first century C.E. This involves neither the reconstruction of a formal tradition history, nor the claim that the empirical author of the Gospel himself knew and alluded directly to the documents discussed below. We are interested in a synchronic semiotic snapshot of aspects of the Akedah available in the encyclopedia at roughly the time of the setting and composition of the Gospel. These aspects can be fruitfully discussed within five broad categories: (1) an emphasis on Isaac's willing and active role; (2) an association with the Temple Mount in Jerusalem; (3) an association with Passover; (4) soteriological ramifications (e.g., blessing, election, expiation, exemplarism);¹ and (5) the development of apocalyptic and theophanic elements.

The investigation will be restricted to witnesses most significant for the interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew in terms of their presentation of Isaac and their antiquity. Thus, given the difficulties and controversies concerning dating, I will not deal with rabbinic and

¹ Terms such as "soteriology" and "expiation" and "exemplarism," among others, do more properly belong to the realm of Christian theology; I employ them in discussing non-Christian Jewish texts because (1) they are heuristically useful; (2) scholars studying these texts—including Jewish scholars like Vermes—have routinely employed them; and (3) early Christianity being a Jewish phenomenon, it stands in continuity with its Jewish parent body.

targumic texts (which have been treated at great length by others).² Rather, I will focus on pertinent documents that can be dated with relative confidence no later than the first century C.E. By doing so, I hope to avoid the charge of anachronism and thus strengthen my case. Finally, this chapter and the next are organized by document in rough chronological progression, not category; this facilitates discussions of dating and more substantive exegetical investigations of the texts.

The contours of the development of the Akedah in Judaism and thus its relevance for that Jewish phenomenon called early Christianity are contested. Rabbinic and targumic texts have dominated the discussion to the detriment of the treatment of the Akedah in earlier documents of more certain date. Certain scholars who see traditions of the Akedah developing early often engage in anachronism, grafting the content of rabbinic and Targumic presentations back onto earlier texts (particularly regarding expiation and merit), while others who are convinced the Akedah developed late often minimize and misrepresent the significance of earlier presentations (particularly the concept of an Isaac willing to participate in his own sacrifice). In both cases earlier texts routinely suffer significant misinterpretation. Presentations of the Akedah in those texts deserve careful investigation in their own right and, when examined with proper literary and theological sensitivity apart from rabbinic and targumic literature, reveal that aspects of the Akedah often thought late developed early, prior to the end of the first century C.E. Before examining the presentations of the Akedah in the pertinent texts, a summary of issues regarding the definition and dating of the Akedah as delineated in the introduction is in order.

First, the absolute phrase “the Akedah” occasions controversy and confusion. Instead of using the term with reference to its later Amoraic manifestation with atonement as its *sine qua non* (Davies’s and Chilton’s position) or with the concept of a willing Isaac as its essence (Vermes’s and Fisk’s position), it is again used here as a convenient collective term designating any and all presentations of the fundamental story of Gen 22, including Gen 22, even those versions in which Isaac is not explicitly

² I will not examine certain sources whose relevance is of doubtful significance, such as Philo the Elder, Alexander Polyhistor and Demetrius (in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 9.19.4 and 9.20.1). In light of the serious questions regarding dating and Christian interpolations, references to Abraham and Isaac in testamentary literature such as *T. Levi* 18:6–7 and *T. Ab.* 4:1, 7 may be relevant in that they may show that Christians were linking Jesus and Isaac and will be discussed in the treatment of the baptism in chapter 7.

bound. Given the great variety found among the various presentations, it is better to think in terms of Wittgensteinian “family resemblances” than in terms of strict definitions and indispensable essences.

Second, dating the documents containing those aspects is controversial as well. Again, certain scholars such as Davies and Chilton insist on post-70 C.E. dates for *L.A.B.* and 4 Maccabees. Yet often overlooked is the fact that the date of a document simply provides the *terminus ante quem* for any tradition presented therein such as the Akedah. Further, the manner of its presentation reveals something about the breadth and depth of its cultural currency. Since that which is recent and innovative necessitates detailed presentation, such concision indicates that this idea had widespread cultural currency and thus reflects traditional views. There is a law of inverse correlation: the more slender a certain reference, the more ancient and widespread its cultural currency.

4.2 GEN 22 MT

We begin with the Bible. Aspects of the Akedah put forth by later tradents were not simply foisted upon Gen 22, but were driven in part by the particular features and gaps of Gen 22 itself. While external factors certainly influence reinterpretations of texts, the biblical versions of Gen 22 are sufficient in and of themselves to precipitate the radical innovations in the traditions of the Akedah; the crisis of 70 C.E. or the rise of Christianity may be considered also sufficient and important but not strictly necessary.

In Gen 22 MT, the Akedah is a test (22:1, נִסָּה) of Abraham’s obedience (22:18, שָׁמַע). While Abraham’s obedience secures confirmation of the blessing originally given in Gen 12:1–3 and Gen 15,³ Gen 22 MT also displays development of the blessing.⁴ First, the blessing is now categorical: Gen 22:17 contains the only occurrence of בָּרַךְ as an infinitive

³ Crenshaw observes that “the command’s threefold nature recalls the deity’s earlier threefold command to depart from Ur of the Chaldees, and Abraham’s unquestioning obedience links the consequent blessing in Gen. 22.15–18 with Gen. 12.1–3” (*Defending God: Biblical Responses to the Problem of Evil* [New York: Oxford, 2005], 62–63). Compare Gen 12:1 and 22:2 (“Go from your land”/“Go to the land”); 12:6 and 22:2 (“Moreh”/“Moriah”); and 12:3 and 22:18 (universal blessing).

⁴ Gordon J. Wenham, “The Aqedah: A Paradigm of Sacrifice,” in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* (ed. David P. Wright, David Noel Freedman and Avi Hurvitz; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 101.

absolute with respect to Abraham (כִּי־בְרַךְ אֲבִרָכְךָ). Second, Abraham's descendants are now compared to the sand of the seashore (22:17) as well as the stars of the sky (15:5). Third, the oath of 22:16 is unique; nowhere else does the LORD swear by himself. Fourth, the conduit of blessing is now Isaac; whereas 12:3 states, "in you [Abraham] all the families of the earth shall be blessed," in 22:18 God tells Abraham that it is "in your seed" (בְּזֶרְעֶךָ)—Isaac—that the nations will be blessed. Abraham's obedience has altered the covenant. Moberly observes, "It is not that the divine promise has become contingent upon Abraham's obedience, but that Abraham's obedience has been incorporated into the divine promise. Henceforth Israel owes its existence not just to Yahweh but also to Abraham."⁵

Interpreters who would later invest the Akedah with some sort of salvific significance were thus simply building on a facet of the biblical story. Not only was Abraham's deed considered to have beneficial effects, however. Isaac's role was reinterpreted so that he became a second protagonist on par with Abraham, and his own conduct was thought to achieve benefits for the people of Israel. Even this is not a pure innovation in opposition to the substance of the biblical story: while Isaac is described as a mere "lad" (נֶעֶר, Gen 22:5, 12) and plays a largely passive role in the biblical account, the phrase "the two of them walked on united" (וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו; Gen 22:6, 8) likely suggested to later tradents that Isaac was indeed aware of the situation and thus willing to be sacrificed.

The particular nature of the command Abraham obeys should not be overlooked, for "it is not simply that an extraordinary act of obedience by a righteous man leads to extraordinary blessing. It is that one man's obedience climaxing in an act of sacrifice leads to extraordinary blessing."⁶ It is thus not surprising that the Akedah, the "paradigm of sacrifice," becomes associated with the temple in Jewish tradition.⁷ Again, however, the association can be seen in Gen 22 MT itself. First, the Akedah occurs three days' journey from Beersheba (Gen 21:33; 22:4, 19), which could indicate Jerusalem.⁸ Second, "seeing" (רָאָה) figures

⁵ Moberly, "The Earliest Commentary on the Aqedah," VT 38 (1988): 320–21.

⁶ Wenham, "Aqedah," 102.

⁷ Cf. 2 Chr 3:1, Jub. 18:13 and Josephus, *Ant.* 1.224 and 226, to be discussed below.

⁸ Moberly, "Earliest Commentary," 307; idem, "Living Dangerously: Genesis 22 and the Quest for Good Biblical Interpretation" in *The Art of Reading Scripture* (ed. Richard B. Hays and Ellen Davis; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 192.

prominently in the story (Gen 22:4, 8, 13, 14), and may indicate an association with the temple, since Jerusalem is one of two places “*par excellence*, where the vision of God is granted” (cf. 2 Sam 24:15–17; Isa 6:1; Ps 48:5, 8).⁹ Third, the secondary addition *בהר יהוה יראה* in 22:14b likely refers to the Temple Mount, known elsewhere in Scripture as the “mount of the house of YHWH” or the “mount of YHWH” (cf. Ps 24:3; Isa 2:2–3, 30:29; Mic 4:1–2; Zech 8:3; 2 Chr 33:15).¹⁰ Fourth, the phrase “as it is said to this day” (*יאמר היום*) “suggest[s] association with a well-known location” such as the Temple Mount.¹¹ Isaac Kalimi sums up the import:

[T]he narrator-redactor made a definite but anachronistic connection between the ‘mount of the Lord’ known to his readers and ‘that site,’ ‘on one of the heights’ in the ‘land of Moriah’ called by Abraham ‘*ראה*’ ה’. In this way, he set the story in a place of some importance in the world in which he lived and even imparted to the Temple Mount an additional measure of sanctity as a place chosen for sacrifices (animal sacrifices, to be precise) in the earliest antiquity.¹²

Finally, Gen 22 contains theophanic and nascent apocalyptic elements later developed and exploited in apocalyptic directions by later interpreters, such as the phenomenon of ‘seeing’ (*ראה*, vv. 4, 8, 13, 14) and the Angel’s two appearances (vv. 11–12 and 15–18).

4.3 GEN 22 LXX

At first glance, the Old Greek version of Gen 22 seems to display little explicit development of the figure of Isaac. A closer reading, however, reveals subtleties of vocabulary potentially significant for the figure of Isaac and the interpretation of Isaac.

In Gen 22:2, God commands Abraham, λαβὲ τὸν υἱὸν σου τὸν ἀγαπητόν ὃν ἡγάπησας τὸν Ἰσαακ. Not only do Matt 3:17 and 17:5 display significant syntactical parallelism with this verse (ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός; cf. also Gen 22:12 and 16, which have the identical phrase in the genitive), but the term ἀγαπητός itself may indicate a more active

⁹ Moberly, “Earliest Commentary,” 307; idem, “Living Dangerously,” 192.

¹⁰ H. G. M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 204; and Isaac Kalimi, “The Land of Moriah, Mount Moriah, and the Site of Solomon’s Temple in Biblical Historiography,” *HTR* 83 (1990): 346.

¹¹ Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 204.

¹² Kalimi, “Land of Moriah,” 346.

Isaac and evoke the theme of martyrdom. In his magisterial two-volume work on the Akedah in antiquity, Lukas Kundert asserts that the phrase τὸν ἀγαπητὸν ὃν ἠγάπησας (Gen 22:2) is redundant. Therefore, ἀγαπητός must mean something other than simply “beloved” (“geliebt”). “Only” (“einzig”) is a second option, since יְחִיד stands in the MT. This option is insufficient, however, since the LXX, Aquila and ms. Athos Λαύρα often render יְחִיד in other loci with μονογενής. The third and only remaining option is to understand ἀγαπητός in terms of God’s favor resulting from obedience. Kundert thus prefers the cumbersome phrase “(bevorzugt, weil) ergeben,” the sense in Josephus’ *Antiquities* at 5.438 (ἀγαπητὸν δ’ ἦν τὸ μὴ καὶ προσαπολέσθαι σεσυλημένον) as well as certain occurrences in the LXX: when ἀγαπητός renders אהבה, “Selbsthingabe” is involved, as well as fear of the LORD (Deut 10:12), the love of the LORD and the keeping of his commandments (Exod 10:6; Deut 5:10, 7:9, 11:1; 1 Kgs 3:3; Dan 9:4; Neh 1:5), and loving and serving him with reference to cultic and ethical action (Deut 10:12; 11:22; 19:9; 30:16; Josh 22:5; 23:11).¹³

Further, in Gen 22:2 LXX Abraham is commanded to take Isaac not into the “land of Moriah” as in the MT (אֶל-אֶרֶץ הַמֹּרְיָה), but εἰς τὴν γῆν τὴν ὑψηλὴν. For this reason some have suggested that “Moriah” was introduced into the MT tradition later. Be that as it may, it is most interesting to note that the Matthean transfiguration takes place on a “high mountain” (εἰς ὄρος ὑψηλὸν; Matt 17:1).

In Gen 22:5, the MT uses נָעַר for both Abraham’s servants and also Isaac. In the Greek, however, we find παῖς employed for Abraham’s young men/servants but τὸ παιδάριον for Isaac. That the Greek text uses two different words for the young men/servants on one hand and Isaac on the other suggests a development of the figure of Isaac, and the contexts of the word παιδάριον in other loci suggest that Isaac in Gen 22 LXX is not a lad or boy but a young man. In Gen 37:2 LXX (and MT), Joseph is said to be seventeen; shortly thereafter in Gen 37:30 LXX, Reuben refers to him as τὸ παιδάριον. In *Jos. Asen.* 27:2 the word is used of nineteen-year-old Benjamin. In Tob 6:3 παιδάριον is used of Tobit’s son, who is no mere boy but a young man on a journey.

¹³ Lukas Kundert, *Die Opferung/Bindung Isaaks* (2 vols.; WMANT 78–79; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1998), 1:49–56.

Certain interpreters assert that the subsection of Gen 22:6–8 presents subtle but significant indications revealing an increase in the stature of Isaac. In his monograph on early Christian and rabbinic interpretation of Gen 22, Edward Kessler observes that the Greek omits the suffixes of the MT in vv. 7–8, rendering “my father” (אָבִי) as merely “father” (πάτερ) and “here I am, my son” (הִנְנִי בְנִי) as “what is it, son?” (τί ἐστὶν τέκνον) in v. 7, and again rendering “my son” (בְנִי) as merely “son” (τέκνον) in v. 8. Kessler argues that the literal translation of הִנְנִי as ἰδοὺ ἐγώ in v. 1 reveals that these changes were deliberate, and thus maintains that “[t]he removal of the suffixes increases the formality of the conversation and reduces the intimacy produced by the Hebrew construction (particularly the repetition of ‘my son’ [בְנִי]) and, as a result, the conversation between Abraham and Isaac is depicted as less affectionate.”¹⁴ Kessler further contends that the rendering of the “childlike question” of וְאַיָּה הִשָּׁה לְעֵלָּה in v. 7 as ποῦ ἐστὶν τὸ πρόβατον τὸ εἰς ὀλοκάρπωσιν is “a more formal and adult question.”¹⁵ Therefore, “it is possible to discern [Isaac’s] growing importance even in the LXX translation of vv. 6–8... The increased formality and the removal of the childlike language suggests that the LXX did not wish to portray Isaac as a helpless child but preferred to describe him as a more mature figure.”¹⁶

Kundert proposes an even more radical reading of v. 6–8, in which Isaac would be identified as the sacrifice and would be aware of such. Both the MT and LXX of Abraham’s response in v. 8 to Isaac’s question about the animal for the burnt offering in v. 7 can be read in a way that understands בְנִי and τέκνον not as vocatives but rather as appositives, thus making “(my) son” the identity of the victim. Kundert thus reads the Greek version, ὁ θεὸς ὄψεται ἐαυτῷ πρόβατον εἰς ὀλοκάρπωσιν τέκνον, as “Gott wird sich ein Schaf für das Brandopfer ansehen: Mein Kind!”¹⁷

Further, while vv. 6 and 8 MT both end with וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו, the Greek in v. 6 presents καὶ ἐπορεύθησαν οἱ δύο ἅμα but in v. 8 πορευθέντες δὲ ἀμφοτέροι ἅμα. Having examined several loci in Genesis in which either [οἱ] δύο or ἀμφοτέροι appears (2:24; 3:1; 3:7; 4:19;

¹⁴ Kessler, *Bound by the Bible*, 102.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 102–03.

¹⁷ Kundert, *Die Opferung/Bindung Isaaks*, 1:66–67.

6:19–20; 7:2–3; 21:27; 21:31; 33:4; 40:5; and 41:11), Kundert concludes that the latter term suggests commonality and identity; therefore:

Mit der Übersetzung von שְׁנֵיהֶם יָחִידוֹ durch ἀμφότεροι ἅμα könnte angedeutet sein, dass sich nach dem dazwischenliegenden Gespräch eine qualitative Veränderung in oder zwischen den beiden Männern vollzogen hat. Der Übersetzer könnte den Eindruck erwecken wollen, dass die zwei zuvor als zwei Einzelpersonen voneinander zu unterscheiden waren, und dass jetzt der Gang des einen nicht mehr vom Gang des anderen zu trennen ist. Will die Übersetzung andeuten, dass Isaak jetzt weiss, was ihn erwartet? Der Text bleibt undeutlich, doch vielleicht will er andeuten, dass durch die Antwort Abrahams eine Veränderung im gegenseitigen Verhältnis von Abraham und Isaak auf ihrem Weg nach Morijah stattgefunden hat.¹⁸

Finally, the use of the word πρόβατον for שֶׁה in v. 7 may be highly significant:

Mit πρόβατον als Opfertier entfernt sich die LXX von späteren hebräischen und ntl-griechischen Interpretationen des Opfertieres als שֶׁה—Lamm (die Voraussetzung ist für die Parallelisierung der Isaak-Gestalt mit dem Pessah-Lamm, wie es ntl in der Gestalt Jesu geschieht).¹⁹

In sum, the text of Gen 22 LXX evinces more interest in and development of the figure of Isaac than the MT and provides significant points of syntactic parallelism with salient passages in the Gospel of Matthew.

4.4 2 CHRONICLES

However vague the association with the Temple Mount may be in Gen 22, the Chronicler, writing in the fourth century B.C.E., makes it plain. In 2 Chr 3:1 we encounter a reference to Solomon's building the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah (יְחִלֵּל שְׁלֹמֹה בִּירוּשָׁלַם בְּהַר הַמֹּרִיָּה (לְבָנוֹת אֶת-בֵּית-יְהוָה בִּירוּשָׁלַם בְּהַר הַמֹּרִיָּה), thus "claiming that this same place is none other than 'Mount Moriah,' where Isaac was bound, to be sacrificed by Abraham;" the allusion is "unmistakable."²⁰ Some suggest that "Moriah" originated with 2 Chr 3:1 and was incorporated

¹⁸ Ibid., 1:68.

¹⁹ Ibid., 1:70; see 1:65.

²⁰ Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 551.

into Gen 22:2 later;²¹ this is unlikely, since (1) the root מִרְיָה is integral to the narrative;²² and (2) it may make more sense to see the specificity of 2 Chr 3:1 as a later interpretation of the generality of “the land of Moriah” in Gen 22.²³

The identification becomes “an unquestioned datum of post-biblical tradition.”²⁴ *Jubilees* explicitly labels the site of the Akedah “mount Zion” (*Jub.* 18:13), while Josephus names the site “Mount Moriah” (εἰς τὸ μώριον ὄρος, *Ant.* 1.224) and states that the location was the mountain where David would later build the temple (1.226). Vermes thinks that the association of temple and Akedah makes the latter the ground of the sacrificial rites of the former, as all expiatory sacrifices “depended upon the virtue of the Akedah, the self-offering of that Lamb whom God had recognized as the perfect victim of the perfect burnt offering.”²⁵ While Vermes may overstate the case, it is reasonably certain that the temple was associated with the Akedah very early, at least by the end of the fourth century B.C.E., and that the Akedah was seen as the ground or etiology of temple sacrifice.

4.5 JUBILEES

Jubilees is a critical witness, given its early date (160–150 B.C.E.)²⁶ and fascinating rewriting of Gen 22.²⁷ Set on Mount Zion, *Jubilees*’ presentation of the Akedah is a dualistic cosmic contest between the Angel of the Presence and the demonic Prince Mastema, the etiology of Passover which functions as narrative paranesis in service of an exemplarist

²¹ Among others, Gerhard von Rad, *Das Opfer des Abraham* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1971), 15–16; and Walther Zimmerli, *I. Mose 12–25* (ZBK; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1976), 110.

²² Kalimi, “Land of Moriah,” 349; Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 204–05.

²³ Jon D. Levenson observes, “If the author of ‘Moriah’ in Gen 22.2 got the name from 2 Chr 3.1 or any source like it, it is odd that he then defied the later Jewish identification of Moriah with the Temple Mount and employed it idiosyncratically as the name of the whole region” (*The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993], 119).

²⁴ Japhet, *Chronicles*, 552.

²⁵ Vermes, “Redemption,” 211.

²⁶ For dating, see James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees* (Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 17–21.

²⁷ For an expanded treatment of what follows, see Leroy A. Huizenga, “The Battle for Isaac: Exploring the Composition and Function of the Akedah in the Book of *Jubilees*,” *JSP* 13 (2002): 33–59.

soteriology. Thus four of the five categories are present; *Jubilees* lacks only an explicitly willing Isaac.²⁸

Jubilees rewrites the biblical account by adding significant framing and smaller additions within. *Jubilees* presents Abraham as obedient, a lover of the LORD and faithful in affliction (*Jub.* 17:15). Evocative of the satanic challenge in Job, Prince Mastema declares that Abraham loves Isaac above all else (17:16) and challenges the LORD to test Abraham by commanding him to sacrifice Isaac.²⁹ Since Abraham was faithful through six other trials (17:17–18), however, the LORD already knows Abraham's character. Thereafter the account generally follows Gen 22:1–10. The near-sacrifice, however, occurs precisely at the time of the Passover ritual: the command comes on the twelfth of the first month and Abraham and his party make a three-day journey prior to Isaac's binding (*Jub.* 18:3). Then comes a remarkable addition: the Angel of the Presence relates that he "stood" while the LORD instructed him to intervene (18:9). The account then follows Gen 22:11–19 with significant additions. Prince Mastema is "shamed" (*Jub.* 18:12). The location is "Mount Zion" (18:13). To the blessing of Gen 22:15–18, *Jubilees* adds, "And I have made known to all that you are faithful to me in everything which I say to you" (*Jub.* 18:16), the key to understanding the Akedah and Passover in *Jubilees*: the test of Abraham's obedience in Gen 22 becomes in *Jubilees* a revelation of Abraham's character "to all" (*Jub.* 18:16), of which the LORD was in any case already aware (17:17–18).

Finally, after Abraham's journey to Beersheba, he observes a feast:

And he observed this festival every year (for) seven days with rejoicing. And he named it 'the feast of the LORD' according to the seven days during which he went and returned in peace. And thus it is ordained and

²⁸ That Isaac is a passive figure in *Jubilees* does not necessarily mean that the author was unfamiliar with the concept of a willing Isaac. *Jubilees* could lack an active Isaac because of the author's abhorrence at child sacrifice: "And they will sacrifice their children to the demons and to every work of the error of their heart" (1:11b).

²⁹ Thus the onus for the directive shifts from God to Prince Mastema in an attempt to exculpate God from commanding child sacrifice, which *Jubilees* abhors (1:11b). Similarly, *Jubilees* substitutes Mastema for the LORD in its recounting of the strange threat to Moses at Midian (Exod 4:24–26; *Jub.* 48:2–4a). On the Jobian motifs, see J. T. A. G. M. van Ruiten, "Abraham, Job and the Book of Jubilees: The Intertextual Relationship of Genesis 22:1–19, Job 1–2:13, and Jubilees 17:15–18:19," in *The Sacrifice of Isaac: The Akedah (Genesis 22) and its Interpretations* (ed. Edward Noort and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002), 58–85.

written in the heavenly tablets concerning Israel and his seed to observe this festival seven days with festal joy (18:18–19).³⁰

The Akedah has become the etiology of Passover, the only seven-day feast in the Bible (Lev 23:6; Num 28:17).

The connection is achieved not only through dating, but also through verbal and theological parallels. Abraham's festival is marked by "rejoicing" and "joy" (*Jub.* 18:18–19); the exodus, the first Passover, is "the beginning of joy" (49:2) and the purpose of the annual celebration is to "rejoice before the LORD" (49:22). Prince Mastema is the satan figure in both accounts (17:16; 18:9, 12; 48:2, 9), only in these two accounts is he "shamed" (18:12; 49:12), and only in these two accounts does the Angel of the Presence provide deliverance from Mastema by "standing" against him (18:9; 48:13). Thus, both accounts are told in precise terms of each other. In both accounts, the exercise of obedience on the part of those delivered averts the demonic threat, causing the Angel of the Presence to "stand" against Mastema and thus "shame" him. *Jubilees* thus presents the Akedah and Passover accounts as narrative paranesis in service of an exemplarist soteriology. Abraham's obedience is not meritorious for anyone else. Rather, Abraham's obedience and that of the Israelites of the exodus generation must be emulated if members of the nation are to remain in the bounds of the covenant.

Maintaining covenant status requires rigorous obedience to covenant stipulations, for the covenant is conditional, depending upon Israel and her members for its maintenance and their preservation. Failure to obey the details precipitates punishment, exclusion from the covenant people and ultimately eternal condemnation. Certain sins, such as failure to perform circumcision when required (*Jub.* 15:33–34) and exogamy (30:7–17), are unpardonable. The nations have no hope; their judgment is inscribed on the heavenly tablets³¹ and is thus inescapable (5:13–16). Israel can receive pardon on the Day of Atonement (5:17–18; cf. Jer 36:3 and 18:8), but Israelites can indeed forfeit their

³⁰ All quotations are from O. S. Wintermute's translation in *OTP*, 2:52–142.

³¹ The phenomenon of "heavenly tablets" is one of *Jubilees'* rhetorical strategies for bolstering the authority of its message. See Hindy Najman, "Interpretation as Primordial Writing: Jubilees and Its Authority Conferring Strategies," *JSJ* 30 (1999): 379–410, esp. 389–400. Najman notes, "The very fact that these judgments are written in the heavens is sufficient to authorize them and to render it impossible to question their justice" (398). See also Shalom Paul, "Heavenly Tablets and the Book of Life," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University* 5 (1973): 345–53.

status: transgressors “will be recorded in the heavenly tablets as enemies” and “will be blotted out of the book of life and written in the book of those who will be destroyed and with those who will be rooted out from the land” (*Jub.* 30:22).

Not only is covenant status fragile; it is threatened by Mastema and his minions at every turn. *Jubilees* emphasizes the apocalyptic, dualistic struggle between angelic and demonic forces and their influence on temporal events. Predetermination tempers this dualism, however; all is firmly under divine control, even Mastema’s forces (10:7–9). The latter nevertheless threaten the covenant people through (1) temptation and (2) actual destruction.³² Obedience secures both deliverance from the demonic forces threatening to destroy the covenant line and also reprieve from divine punishment, a lesson communicated implicitly in the Akedah passage and explicitly in the Passover account.

In the latter, Mastema’s forces oppose Israel’s deliverance, seeking to kill Moses (*Jub.* 48:1–4), aiding the magicians (48:9), sending the Egyptians to pursue the Israelites (48:12, 16), and accusing the Israelites (48:15, 18), while the forces of the Angel of the Presence control and ultimately thwart them. Without the proper celebration of the Passover, however, the Israelites’ firstborn would have been destroyed. Here the forces of Mastema and the forces of the Angel of the Presence are at one in purpose and function:

³² Mastema, “chief of the [evil] spirits” (10:7–8) and the satan (10:11), controls the demons, the children of the Watchers (10:1–6). They not only lead Noah’s grandchildren astray but also blind and kill them (10:1–2). In response to Noah’s prayer, the LORD permits the Angel of the Presence to bind all the demons, but Mastema protests that he needs them to execute his authority on earth. The LORD tithes to Mastema, permitting him to retain a tenth (10:7–9). Mastema incites war, slavery, and idolatry, as well as general sin, transgression, and bloodshed (11:1–6). After Terah’s birth, Mastema sends crows and birds ‘so that they might eat the seed which was being sown in the earth in order to spoil the earth so that they might rob mankind of their labors’ (11:10–11). In 12:20 Abram prays to be delivered from evil spirits leading people astray, and later in 19:26–29 in his blessing to Jacob prays that “the spirit of Mastema may not rule over you or over your seed in order to remove you from following the LORD who is your God henceforth and forever” (19:28). In 35:17, Isaac encourages Rebekah to have no fear that Esau will do harm to Jacob, because “Jacob’s guardian is stronger and more powerful than Esau’s.” These citations demonstrate (1) that *Jubilees* emphasizes the apocalyptic element to an extreme degree; and (2) that the evil spirits not only lead people astray, but also harm and kill on earth. Their influence is not purely psycho-spiritual; it is also physical. In these two ways—morally as well as physically—the legions of Mastema threaten the intended beneficiaries of God’s covenant and thus its very existence. Mastema’s forces seek both the dereliction and destruction of Israel.

[A]ll the powers of Mastema were sent [a divine passive] to kill all of the firstborn... And this is the sign which the LORD gave to them in every house where they saw the blood of a year-old lamb upon its doors so that they would not enter into the house to kill, they would pass over so that all who were in the house might be saved because the sign of the blood was on its doors. And the host of the LORD did everything which the LORD commanded them. And they passed over all the children of Israel (49:2–4).

The onus of deliverance falls upon the Israelites themselves. The forces of the Angel of the Presence partner with the forces of Mastema to slaughter the firstborn, and only the proper preparation of the Passover lamb and the placing of its blood on the doors ensure the Israelites' deliverance.

The moral is drawn for the continuing celebration of Passover: The Passover festival is to be observed "on its day according to all of its law" (*Jub.* 49:7); it is an "eternal decree" which is "engraved upon the heavenly tablets" and its observance is to continue forever (49:8). Whoever fails to keep Passover properly will be "uprooted" and "lift[s] up sin against himself" (49:9). Punishment is the LORD's prerogative, regardless of the agent who carries it out. Since the LORD uproots those who fail to keep the Passover, the Angelic Host and Mastema's forces are here one. The resulting death of any firstborn Israelite would thus have been divine punishment, not simply a victory of Mastema. It is an object lesson: because the Israelites obeyed in regards to Passover, they were spared (49:3). Obedience to covenant stipulations is required for deliverance, for the persistence of the line of observant, obedient Israel.

This point is implicit in the Akedah. By emphasizing Abraham's obedience, faithfulness and love (*Jub.* 17:15) and the LORD's confidence in him (17:17–18), *Jubilees* presents Mastema's plan as truly clever. Mastema would use Abraham's virtues against him to eliminate the covenant, either through Abraham's disobedience or Isaac's demise. Either way Mastema's cause advances: the severity of the injunction provides temptation to disobedience, but Abraham's obedience would lead to the physical demise of the line. Abraham is trapped. Yet Abraham obeys without question, and thus the LORD's cunning is revealed. The LORD was already aware of Abraham's faithfulness (17:17–18). Stopping the sacrifice at the last possible moment, the LORD preserves the line of the covenant and also proves Mastema wrong. The deliverance, like that achieved at Passover, is not achieved apart from obedience.

Rather, Abraham's obedience proved to Mastema that he in fact did love the LORD and was faithful and by doing so "shamed" Mastema, who asserted otherwise. Like the children of Israel in their Passover flight, Abraham in his obedience plays an active part in the routing of Mastema. *Jubilees* presents Abraham's obedience as a rationale for his blessing and the multiplication of his progeny (18:14–16), emphasizing Abraham's faithfulness: "And I have made known to all that you are faithful to me in everything which I say to you. Go in peace" (18:16), words not found in Genesis. Abraham is an example "to all": the paranetic point, foreshadowed at the Akedah and made explicit at the exodus, is that obedience procures deliverance and blessing.

Therefore, the Akedah and Passover are linked in *Jubilees* by more than dating, and their linking is fraught with theological significance, *pace* Davies and Chilton, who claim the connection is simply the fortuitous fruit of the rooting of all festivals in the patriarchal period.³³ Further, the Passover lamb has no saving virtue in and of itself, and neither Abraham's nor Isaac's actions at the Akedah are viewed as meritorious, *pace* Vermes, who with reference to *Jubilees* writes, "The saving virtue of the Passover lamb proceeded from the merits of that first lamb, the son of Abraham, who offered himself upon the altar."³⁴ Abraham's obedience is an example; Isaac plays no role. The soteriology of *Jubilees* is thus best described as exemplary, rather than vicarious or expiatory. Each individual of each generation must do as Abraham did and cannot rely on what Abraham or Isaac did.

4.6 4Q225 ('PSEUDO-JUBILEES^A')³⁵

The active, willing Isaac whom *Jubilees* lacks is present in 4Q225, dated between 150 B.C.E. and 20 C.E.³⁵ This text is thus of vital importance.

³³ Davies and Chilton, "Aqedah," 518–19. Davies and Chilton do not deny that the Akedah and Passover are linked by dating; rather, they find no particular theological import, maintaining that the author simply wanted general patriarchal grounding for later festivals.

³⁴ Vermes, "Redemption," 215.

³⁵ "The attractive angular hand of the scribe belongs in the formal sequence and has traits that identify it as Herodian in date... The script resembles the shapes traced by F. M. Cross in figure 2, lines 4–5 ('Scripts', 176)—texts which Cross dates to c. 30 B.C.E.–20 C.E." (James C. VanderKam and Jozef Tadeusz Milik, eds., *Qumran Cave 4* [DJD XIII; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994], 141). Vermes wishes to date it earlier: "The two other 'Pseudo-Jubilees' manuscripts, 4Q226 and 4Q227, the former partly

VanderKam notes, “The version of Gen 22 in 4Q225 demonstrates that at least one Jewish expositor, writing perhaps in the first century B.C.E., was taking exegetical steps that previously were known only from much later Jewish sources,”³⁶ including an active and willing Isaac, apocalyptic elements, and an association of the Akedah with the first Passover, which may have soteriological import.

4.6.1 *An Active and Willing Isaac*

4Q225 presents an active Isaac in fragment 2 ii.4: ...כ אביו אל יִשְׁחַק (‘Isaac said to his father, ‘T[ie ...]’). This second utterance from Isaac, not found in Gen 22 MT or LXX, is found in later texts. *Tg. Ps.-J.* relates that Abraham constructed the altar, bound Isaac (ויעקד), stretched forth his hand, and prepared to slay his son (Gen 22:9). Thereupon Isaac responded to Abraham:

כפת יתי יאות דלא נפרכץ מן צערא דנפשי ונדחי לגובא דחבלא וישתכח
פסולא בקרבנך

(“Tie me well so that I may not struggle in the anguish of my soul and be thrown into the pit of destruction and cause a blemish to be found in your offering,” Gen 22:10). *Tg. Neof.* also uses the verb כפת at this locus, as well as *Gen. Rab.* 56.8, in which Isaac says כפתני יפה (‘Tie me very well’). VanderKam and Milik reconstruct the text of 4Q225 as כ [פּוֹת אוֹתִי יִפֶּה] (‘Tie me well’).³⁷ Vermes proposes כפּוֹת אֶת יָדַי (‘Bind my hands’),³⁸ based on the *Frg. Tg.*³⁹ Joseph Fitzmyer, generally skeptical about claims that aspects of the Akedah developed early, prefers Milik and VanderKam’s reconstruction to Vermes’s but admits, “In either case, the restoration [of כפת] must be right,” given its use in later rabbinic texts.⁴⁰ Florentino García Martínez also concurs.⁴¹

overlapping with 4Q225, are placed by the editors to the second half of the first century B.C.E.” (“New Light,” 140).

³⁶ VanderKam, “The Akedah, Jubilees, and PseudoJubilees,” in *The Quest for Context and Meaning: Studies in Biblical Intertextuality in Honor of James A. Sanders* (ed. Craig A. Evans and Shemaryahu Talmon; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 241.

³⁷ VanderKam and Milik, *Qumran Cave 4*, 151–52.

³⁸ Vermes, “New Light,” 142.

³⁹ Vermes refers simply to the “Targums” and considers his reconstruction more likely than VanderKam’s and Milik’s “since אֶת+suffix is unattested in 4QJubilees and Ps. Jubilees” (“New Light,” 142 n. 12).

⁴⁰ Fitzmyer, “The Sacrifice of Isaac in Qumran Literature,” *Bib* 83 (2002): 219 n. 16.

⁴¹ Florentino García Martínez, “The Sacrifice of Isaac in 4Q225,” in Noort and Tigchelaar, *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, 52–53.

Therefore, in spite of the lacuna, commentators of various perspectives regarding the development and significance of the Akedah readily agree that Isaac here asks his father to tie him, thus indicating his willing participation in the sacrifice. Fitzmyer therefore concedes that 4Q225 “becomes important for the developing Jewish tradition, because it reveals an aspect of Isaac’s cooperation with his own sacrificial death that figures often in Jewish writings of a later date.”⁴²

Further, ii.6–8 presents the Akedah as a test of Isaac’s mettle, not simply Abraham’s faith:

את בניו מן הארץ ומלאכי המשתמה
שמחים ואומרים עכשו יאבד ובכול זה ינסה שר המשתמה אם
ימצא כחש ואם לא ימצא נאמן אברהם לאלוהים ויקרא

(6) his sons from the earth. The angels of the Ma[stemah]

(7) being happy and saying, ‘Now he will perish’. And [in all this the Prince of the Mastemah was testing whether]

(8) he would be found weak, and whether A[braham] should not be found faithful [to God]. He called,]

“‘Now he will perish’” refers to Isaac (ii.7). The antecedent of “his” in ii.6 is Isaac, since targumic traditions at Gen 22:14 and *Gen. Rab.* 56.10 “associate the sacrifice with the future deliverance of the children of Isaac from all distress.”⁴³ Fitzmyer concurs: “Being plural, the word most likely does refer to Isaac, since this embellishment of the Abraham story in Gen 22 knows nothing as yet of the children born to Abraham from Keturah (25, 2).”⁴⁴ The antecedent of “he” in ii.8 is Isaac, since Abraham is mentioned shortly thereafter, since Isaac is the antecedent in ii.7, and since Isaac indicates cooperation in ii.4. In ii.6–8a, then, Isaac is being tested.

Finally, ii.10 states, “God the Lord blessed Is[aac all the days of his life,]” which begins a genealogy. God’s blessing of Isaac is thus emphasized, whereas Gen 22:17 concerns the blessing of Abraham. In short, 4Q225 emphasizes Isaac’s role, presenting an Isaac willing to cooperate in his sacrifice, which is viewed as a test of his courage and results in God’s blessing him.

⁴² Fitzmyer, “Sacrifice,” 219.

⁴³ Vermes, “New Light,” 142 n. 14.

⁴⁴ Fitzmyer, “Sacrifice,” 222.

4.6.2 *Passover/Exodus Connections*

Like *Jubilees*, 4Q225 connects the Akedah and the exodus. First, VanderKam notes that fragment 1 of 4Q225 in fact follows fragment 2, fragment 1 presenting “a series of hints that it is dealing in a Jubilean way with several events that happened in the time of the Exodus from Egypt.”⁴⁵ (1) Line 6 has a direct address to Moses, as does *Jubilees* (23:32; 30:11; 33:13, 18; 49:22; cf. 2:24; 6:13, 20, 32; 15:28; 19:15; 41:26). (2) Line 5 reads, “and he struck them with”; *Jub.* 48:5 reads, “The Lord effected a great revenge against them on account of Israel. He struck them...[.]” (3) Line 5 reads, “...Egypt and God sold them...,” referring to the Israelites’ slavery in Egypt, and line 8 reads, “...was standing, and he took vengeance...”; *Jub.* 48:8–9a reads, “The Lord did everything for the sake of Israel and in accord with his covenant which he made with Abraham to take revenge on them just as they were enslaving them with force. The Prince of Mastema would stand up against you...” (4) Line 10 reads, “...o[n] the shore of the [sea...]” *Jub.* 49:23 reads, “For you celebrated this festival hastily when you were leaving Egypt until the time you crossed the sea into the Wilderness of Sur, because you completed it on the seashore.”

Further, the final words of fragment 2 column ii recall *Jubilees*’ version of the exodus. Lines 11–12 contain the remnants of a brief genealogy of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Levi, “apparently specifying the sum of how many years they lived—a time-span that would cover all the period in Canaan and reach to the Egyptian era,”⁴⁶ and line 13 makes reference to Mastema being “bound” (אסור, if not imperative). *Jub.* 48:15 describes a brief period of four days in which Mastema was bound to prevent his threatening the Israelites during the exodus.

Finally, both Mastema and Belial have significant connections to the exodus.⁴⁷ (1) Line 14 mentions Belial; in *Jub.* 1:20 the accuser is the spirit of Belial. (2) In *Jub.* 15:33 the people of Belial refrain from circumcising their sons; in CD 4.5 Levi refers to the three nets of Belial, and CD 5.18–19 relates that Belial caused the Egyptian magicians Jannes and his brother to oppose Moses and Aaron. (3) The *War Scroll* links Belial and Mastema in 13.4, 13.10–11 and 14.9. (4) *T. Levi* 18.12 refers to Belial’s future binding.

⁴⁵ VanderKam, “*Aqedah*,” 254.

⁴⁶ VanderKam, “*Aqedah*,” 254.

⁴⁷ Ibid. and VanderKam and Milik, *Qumran Cave 4*, 154.

4.6.3 *Soteriological Implications?*

4Q225 therefore presents an active, willing Isaac and sets the Akedah in an exodus context. Discerning any precise soteriological model in 4Q225 is difficult, given its concise and fragmentary nature. The Akedah does involve Isaac's deliverance, however, and fragment 2 is concerned with the sacred line. In i.3–8 the text presents a version of Gen 15:2–6:

[And A]braham [said] to God: 'My Lord, I go on being childless and Eli[ezer] is [the son of my household,] and he will be my heir'. [The Lord] [said] to A[b]raham: 'Lift up (your eyes) and observe the stars, and see [and count] the sand which is on the seashore and the dust of the earth, for if these [can be num]bered, and al[so] if not, your seed will be like this'. And [Abraham] be[lieved] [in] G[o]d, and righteousness was accounted to him.

Immediately thereafter Isaac is born (i.8–9), followed directly by Mastemah's instigation of the dreadful episode (i.9–12), like *Jubilees*. After the averting of the sacrifice (ii.8–10), 4Q225 states, "God the Lord blessed Is[aa]c all the days of his life. He became the father of] Jacob, and Jacob became the father of Levi, [a third] genera[tion. *vacat* All] the days of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Lev[i were . . . years]" (ii.10–12). Thus, the concern for progeny and the Akedah are bound tightly together both at the outset and conclusion: "the writer is concerned with Abraham's progeny, with the sacred line that arises from him and his son Isaac. The theme of offspring for Abraham provides the setting for the author's rendition of the *Aqedah* story."⁴⁸ Further, in ii.13–14 the text refers to the binding of the Prince of the Mastemah "on account of them" (אסור עליהם . . . ושר המשטמה); *Jub.* 48:15 refers to Mastema's binding to prevent his accusing the Israelites during their flight. 4Q225 may therefore suggest that he was bound at the time of the exodus on account of Abraham's and Isaac's deed.

4Q225 thus ties the Akedah to concerns for the perdurance of the sacred line, much like *Jubilees*. No firm conclusions regarding a particular soteriological perspective can be drawn, however.⁴⁹ 4Q225 seems to draw no morals, explicitly or implicitly, as does *Jubilees*. The most striking aspect of the Akedah in 4Q225, then, remains the figure of an active, willing Isaac, showing that such was known in Jewish tradition

⁴⁸ VanderKam, "*Aqedah*," 252.

⁴⁹ *Pace* Vermes, who believes it is a witness to the early development of the merit attached to Isaac's deed ("New Light," 146).

well prior to Christianity and documents such as *L.A.B.*, 4 Maccabees and the *Antiquities*. By this time, then, no later than 20 C.E., all five aspects of the Akedah under investigation here are in place in Jewish tradition.

4.7 JUDITH

Judith, composed in Hebrew by the end of the second century B.C.E. and likely translated into Greek not long after,⁵⁰ contains a significant but often overlooked reference to God's testing of Isaac (8:26). Judith concludes her stirring address to the elders of Bethulia with these words:

Therefore, my brothers, let us set an example for our kindred, for their lives depend upon us, and the sanctuary—both the temple and the altar—rests upon us. In spite of everything let us give thanks to the Lord our God, who is putting us to the test (πειράζει) as he did our ancestors. Remember what he did with Abraham (ὅσα ἐποίησεν μετὰ Αβρααμ), and how he tested Isaac (καὶ ὅσα ἐπείρασεν τὸν Ἰσαακ), and what happened to Jacob (καὶ ὅσα ἐγένετο τῷ Ἰακώβ) in Syrian Mesopotamia, while he was tending the sheep of Laban, his mother's brother. For he has not tried us with fire (ἐπύρωσεν), as he did them, to search their hearts, nor has he taken vengeance on us; but the Lord scourges those who are close to him, in order to admonish them. (8:24–27)

That the “sanctuary and the temple and the altar” find mention is interesting, as the Akedah is tied to the temple; the reference to fire (ἐπύρωσεν) is similarly suggestive. Might the testing of Isaac in Judith 8:26 involve his active role in the Akedah? First, Judith mentions a specific incident in Jacob's life;⁵¹ parallelism suggests a specific incident

⁵⁰ See Carey Moore, *Judith: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 40; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985), 67–70. Older scholarship often proposed a date in the Persian period: see, *inter alios*, Alfred von Gutschmid, *Kleine Schriften* (5 vols.; Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1889–1894), 5:286; Theodore Nöldeke, *Die alttestamentliche Literatur* (Leipzig: Quandt & Händel, 1868), 78; and W. Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1892), 439.

⁵¹ Both the situation in Judith and the story of Jacob's time with Laban constitute threats to the covenantal promise, like the Akedah. First, Bethulia may recall Bethel in Gen 28:19 and 31:13, which frame the story of Jacob's dealings with Laban (Moore, *Judith*, 150). Second, Jacob's trial under Laban occurs in the context of the extension of the divine promise to Jacob (Gen 28:3–4, 13–15, 19; 31:11–13; 32:27–28). Third, Jacob in Gen 31:36–42 upbraids Laban, detailing the latter's devious behavior and the sufferings he, Jacob, had endured, and concludes by saying, ‘If the God of my father,

is in view in regard to Abraham and Isaac.⁵² Second, even though in Genesis itself Isaac is the “least impressive of the patriarchs,”⁵³ Judith’s speech presents Isaac as an example for emulation. Thus, something heroic is in view, and Isaac’s most heroic moment in Jewish tradition was his intrepid conduct while facing his holocaust. Third, Judith uses *πειράζω* with reference to Isaac; only in Gen 22:1 LXX does one find the word or concept in proximity to Isaac.⁵⁴ Finally, Clement of Rome, writing about 95 C.E., praises “the blessed Judith” (1 *Clem.* 55:4–5) and elsewhere presents the patriarchal trio in a manner directly parallel to Judith’s presentation, making direct reference not only to the Akedah but to Isaac’s active and willing participation therein:

Why was our father Abraham blessed? Was it not because he did what was righteous and true through faith? Isaac gladly allowed himself to be brought forward as a sacrifice, confident in the knowledge of what was about to happen. Jacob departed with humility from his land on account of his brother and went to Laban to serve as a slave; and the twelve scepters of Israel were given to him. (31:2–4)⁵⁵

In Judith’s view, then, perhaps not only Abraham was tested at Moriah, but also Isaac. Discussing Jdt 8:24–27, James Kugel writes,

If Isaac was tested by God, it certainly must have been in this incident, for it is the only testlike episode in his whole life. And if it was a test, was it not (as this passage suggests) also specifically a test of faith, a determination of Isaac’s willingness to give up his very life should God demand it?⁵⁶

the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been on my side, surely you would have sent me away empty handed’ (31:42a). The episode constitutes a threat to the covenantal promise, like the Akedah.

⁵² The plural *ὅσα* does not count against this, as if it were a general reference to Isaac’s entire life (*pace* Moore, *Judith*, 183). The event Judith mentions regarding Jacob is not general but circumscribed, referring not to the trials of Jacob’s entire life but to certain things within a defined period of Jacob’s life. In light of this, might the “the things” with which Isaac was tested comprise the plural events of the Akedah?

⁵³ Moore, *Judith*, 183.

⁵⁴ Kundert notes, “Einzig Erwähnung des Wortes *πειράζω* in Verbindung mit den Erzählungen um Isaak ist Gen 22. Damit erhärtet sich der Verdacht, dass mit Jdt 8 nicht eine (fiktive) Versuchung Isaaks aus Gen 26f... angesprochen wird, sondern wohl diese eher in Gen 22 selbst erblickt wird, der einzigen Stelle aus Gen LXX, in der *πειράζω* belegt ist” (*Die Opferung/Bindung Isaaks*, 1:72).

⁵⁵ Trans. Ehrman, LCL. On 1 *Clement* and the Akedah, see below, chapter 5, pp. 126–27.

⁵⁶ James L. Kugel, *The Bible As It Was* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997), 174–75.

4.8 SUMMARY

Having examined relevant pre-Christian texts—Gen 22 MT and LXX, 2 Chronicles, *Jubilees*, 4Q225, and Judith—we find that all five aspects of the Akedah relevant for the Gospel of Matthew are in place: an active and willing Isaac, an association of the Akedah with the temple and with Passover, soteriological implications, and the development of apocalyptic and theophanic elements. The next chapter will examine texts from the first century C.E. which present these same aspects in most dramatic fashion.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE AKEDAH IN THE FIRST CENTURY OF THE COMMON ERA

In the previous chapter we saw that all aspects of the Akedah relevant for this study were in place prior to the emergence of Christianity (an emphasis on Isaac's active role, an association with the temple, an association with Passover, development of apocalyptic and theophanic elements, and soteriological ramifications). These aspects are found also in texts that can be reasonably dated to the first century C.E., texts that are roughly contemporaneous with the emergence of earliest Christianity and thus relevant for the Gospel of Matthew, including many works of Philo, Pseudo-Philo's *L.A.B.*, 4 Maccabees, Josephus' *Antiquities* and *1 Clement*. Further, it must again be emphasized that the date of any particular pertinent document merely provides a *terminus ante quem* for the substance of its presentation of the Akedah and that the manner of any given presentation reflects the cultural currency of that substance. As we shall soon see, many mentions of Isaac's willingness, while clear, are concise. Their very brevity reveals that a document in which they appear is treating the Akedah as a resource appropriated, not as a novelty created. Again, there is a law of inverse correlation: recent innovations require detailed and expansive presentation, while that which possesses significant cultural currency needs only the slightest reference for its evocation. Thus, even if certain texts such as *L.A.B.* and 4 Maccabees are dated as late as 135 C.E., the manner of their appropriation of aspects of the Akedah reveals the antiquity of those aspects.

5.1 PHILO

The portrayal of the figure of Isaac in Philo's extant presentation of the Akedah is not nearly as radical as those portrayals found in other documents from the first century C.E. Unfortunately, most of Philo's treatments of Isaac are lost.¹ Erwin Goodenough suspected they were

¹ In *Ios.* 1 Philo mentions that he has written on the three patriarchs: "Since I have

deliberately censored by Christians because their portrayal of Isaac was unsettling:

Philo's treatment of the life of Isaac has so largely vanished that I long ago suspected it to have been for some purpose suppressed by Christians for the reason that it said so much about the sacrifice and atoning value of Isaac which Christians wanted to say of Christ alone. Not only have we lost Philo's *On Isaac*, which he wrote to follow his *On Abraham*, but those sections of the *Questions and Answers on Genesis* which treat of the birth of Isaac and the Akedah are also missing.²

Throughout Philo's extant works, however, the figure of Isaac is enhanced in intriguing ways, taking on significance well beyond that presented by the biblical text itself.

5.1.1 *Texts Apart from De Abrahamo*

Isaac Born with a Good Nature and Self-Taught

In texts apart from *De Abrahamo*, Philo presents an Isaac superior to the other patriarchs in two chief respects. First, Philo repeatedly asserts that Isaac was created and born with a good nature and thus self-taught. In *De somniis*, Philo writes:

Do not think that it is without special point that in this passage the divine relationship to Abraham is expressed by the words "Lord and God," that to Isaac by the word "God" only. For Isaac is a figure of knowledge which listens to and learns from no other teacher but itself, while Abraham is a figure of knowledge gained by instruction; and Isaac is a dweller on his native soil, while Abraham is an emigrant and a stranger in the land... The other character [Isaac] needs the power of kindness only, for, having obtained by nature goodness and beauty of character, he was not one who had been improved by the admonishment of a governor, but as the result of gifts showered upon him from above he shewed himself good and perfect from the outset.³ (*Somn.* 1.160–1)

For the oracle spoke of the man, who in kin was the Practiser's grandfather, as his father; but did not, when mentioning his actual father, give him the title of parent. The words are: 'I am the Lord God of Abraham

described the lives of these three, the life which results from teaching [Abraham], the life of the self-taught [Isaac] and the life of practice [Jacob], I will carry on the series by describing a fourth life, that of the statesman" (trans. Colson, LCL).

² Erwin Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (Bollingen Series 37; New York: Pantheon Books [Princeton: Princeton University Press], 1953–68), 4:191; cited in part by Kessler, *Bound by the Bible*, 102.

³ Trans. Colson and Whitaker, LCL.

thy father'—and yet he was his grandfather—and again, 'the God of Isaac' [Gen 28:13], without the addition of 'thy father.' Now, is it not worth while to investigate the cause of this? [...] virtue is gained either by nature or by practice or by learning, and has accordingly recorded the patriarchs of the nation as three in number, all wise men... Abraham... had teaching as his guide on the way that leads to the good and beautiful... Isaac... had as his guide a nature which listens to and learns from itself alone. Jacob... relied on exercises and practisings preparatory for the strenuous toil of the arena. (*Somn.* 1.166–69)

If, however, our practiser exert himself and run to the end of the course, and come to see clearly what he formerly saw dimly as in a dream, and receives the impress of a nobler character and the name of "Israel," "he that seeth God," in place of "Jacob," "the supplanter," he no longer claims as his father Abraham, the man who learned, but Isaac the man who was born good by nature. This was not a story invented by me, but an oracle inscribed upon the sacred tables. For we read that "Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to the well of the oath, and offered a sacrifice to the God of his father Isaac." (*Somn.* 1.171–2)

And Abraham, at the offering up of his beloved and only son [ἐπὶ τῆς τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ καὶ μόνοι παιδὸς ὀλοκαυτώσεως] as a burnt offering, is so addressed [i.e., by name], both when he was beginning to offer the sacrifice, and when, after giving proof of his piety, he was prevented from causing to disappear from among men the nature which learns untaught, called Isaac. (*Somn.* 1.194)

These ideas are found in other texts as well:

But there are some persons whom, even before their creation, God creates and disposes excellently; respecting whom he determines beforehand that they shall have a most excellent inheritance. Do you not see what he says about Isaac to Abraham, when he had no hope of any such thing, namely, that he should become the father of such an offspring, but rather did laugh at the promise, and asked, "Shall a son be born to me, who am a hundred years old; and shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bring forth a child?" [Gen 17:19] But God asserts it positively, and ratifies his promise, saying, "Ye, behold Sarah, thy wife, shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name Isaac, and I will establish my covenant towards him for an everlasting covenant." [Gen 17:19] [...] Since, then, joy diffuses itself over and cheers the soul, not only while it is present but also when it is expected, it was very consistent and natural for God to think Isaac worthy of a good name and of a great gift before he was born, for the name of Isaac, being interpreted, means laughter of soul, and delight, and joy.⁴ (*Leg.* 3.85–87)

⁴ Trans. C. D. Yonge, *The Works of Philo* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993).

Yet that the human race should not totally lack a title to give to the supreme goodness He allows them to use by licence of language, as though it were His proper name, the title of Lord God of the three natural orders, teaching, perfection, practice, which are symbolized [respectively] in the records as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.⁵ (*Mut.* 12)

Again, while the race has three founders it is the first and last of these, Abraham and Jacob, whose names were changed, while the middle founder, Isaac, has the same name throughout. Why is this? Because both the scholar's form of virtue and the practiser's are open to improving influences, since the former desires to know what he is ignorant of, the latter desires crowns of victory and the prizes offered to a soul which rejoices to toil and seek the vision of the truth. On the other hand the kind which has no teacher or pupil but itself, being made what it is by nature rather than by diligence, goes on its way from the first equal and perfect like an even number with no other needed as complement. (*Mut.* 88)

Now Abraham and Jacob, as the Holy Scriptures tell us, became the husbands of several women, concubines as well as legitimate wives, but Isaac had neither more wives than one nor any concubine at all, but his lawful wife is the one who shares his home throughout. Why is this? It is because the virtue that comes through teaching, which Abraham pursues, needs the fruits of several studies.... But the self-learnt kind, of which Isaac is a member... is endowed with a simple nature free from mixture and alloy, and wants neither the practice nor the teaching which entails the need of the concubine as well as the legitimate forms of knowledge... He who has obtained this prize is enrolled as the husband of the queen and mistress virtue. Her name in the Greek means "constancy"; in the Hebrew it is Rebecca. He who has gained the wisdom that comes without toil and trouble, because his nature is happily gifted and his soul fruitful of good, does not seek for any means of betterment: for he has ready beside him in their fullness the gifts of God, conveyed by the breath of God's higher graces, but he wishes and prays that these may remain with him constantly. And therefore I think his Benefactor, willing that His graces once received should stay for ever with him, gives him Constancy for his spouse.⁶ (*Congr.* 34–38)

In other texts apart from *De Abrahamo*, Isaac is also described as "the only example of freedom from passion beneath the sun" (*Det.* 46) and "happiness in its totality" which is "the exercise of perfect virtue in a perfect life" (*Det.* 60).⁷ He is perfect in all the virtues (τὸν ἐν ἀρεταῖς τέλειον Ἰσαάκ; *Sobr.* 8). He also displays radical filial piety in maintaining the names of the wells which his father gave them (QG 4.194;

⁵ Trans. Colson and Whitaker, LCL.

⁶ Trans. Colson and Whitaker, LCL.

⁷ Trans. Colson and Whitaker, LCL.

cf. Gen 26:18). In Philo's view, he is truly "most excellent" (ὁ ἄριστος Ἰσαάκ; *Congr.* 175).

Isaac the True Son of God

Second, Philo also states in four separate texts that Isaac has God as Father and, unlike the other patriarchs, is thus truly the son of God:

What followed at once was the promise of the birth of Isaac. For after calling his mother Sarah instead of Sarai He says to Abraham, "I will give thee a child from her" [Gen 17:16]. Each part of this must be severally examined. First, then, the giver of anything in the proper sense of the word must necessarily give something which belongs to himself, and if this is so Isaac must be not the man Isaac but the Isaac whose name is that of the best of the good emotions, joy, the Isaac who is the laughter of the heart, a son of God [υἱὸς θεοῦ], who gives him as a means to soothe and cheer truly peaceful souls. (*Mut.* 131)

So when he has thus routed evil things, he is filled with joy, as Sarah was; for she says, "the Lord hath made me for laughter," and goes on, "for whosoever shall hear, will rejoice with me" [Gen 21:6]. For God is the Creator of laughter that is good, and of joy, so that we must hold Isaac to be not a product of created beings, but a work of the uncreated One. For if "Isaac" means "laughter," and according to Sarah's unerring witness God is the Maker of laughter, God may with perfect truth be said to be Isaac's father. (*Det.* 124)

So, after saying "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father and the God of Isaac," he adds "fear not" [Gen 28:13]. The words come naturally after the others; for how shall we any longer be afraid, when we have Thee our Defender, a weapon that brings deliverance from fear and every passion? Moreover, it was Thou that didst bring out of obscurity into distinctness the original patterns of our education, Abraham whose teacher, and Isaac whose parent [Ἀβραάμ μὲν διδάξας, Ἰσαάκ δὲ γεννήσας] Thou wast: for Thou didst condescend to be named instructor of the one and father of the other, giving one the position of pupil, the other that of son. (*Somn.* 1.173)

For, also, when happiness, that is Isaac, was born, she says, in the pious exaltation, "The Lord has caused me laughter, and whoever shall hear of it shall rejoice with me." Open your ears, therefore, O ye initiated, and receive the most sacred mysteries. Laughter is joy; and the expression, "has caused," is equivalent to "has begotten." So that what here is said has some such meaning as this, "The Lord has begotten Isaac." For he is the father of perfect nature, sowing and begetting happiness in the soul. (*Leg.* 3.219)

Clearly, Philo's Isaac (whether on the literal or figurative level; the two are not so easily disentangled) has undergone a significant transformation. Whereas the figures of Abraham and Jacob overshadow Isaac in

Genesis, in an intriguing act of interpretive inversion Isaac has effectively supplanted them in significant ways in Philo's works.

5.1.2 De Abrahamo

In Philo's one extant treatment of the Akedah in *De Abrahamo*, we do not encounter the radical developments of the figure of Isaac we find in other texts; Philo's Abraham does not explicitly inform Isaac that he is to be sacrificed and thus Philo's Isaac has no opportunity to assent to his immolation. Philo's presentation focuses squarely on the heroic figure of Abraham and is concerned with defending his actions. Nevertheless, Philo's presentation does display subtle and significant developments of the figure of Isaac.

Abraham's obedience at the Akedah is his "greatest action" and "all the other actions which won the favour of God are surpassed by this" (*Abr.* 167).⁸ In describing Isaac's singularity, Philo explains that he was Abraham's beloved and only son (υἱὸς...ἀγαπητὸς καὶ μόνος).⁹ Philo does not state that Isaac was an adult but implies he was much more than a mere, hapless, ignorant lad; Philo describes Isaac as

a child [simply the article τὸ] of great bodily beauty and excellence of soul. For already he was showing a perfection of virtues beyond his years, so that his father, moved not merely by a feeling of natural affection but also by such deliberate judgment as a censor of character might make, cherished for him a great tenderness. (168)

Philo's aim is to magnify Abraham by magnifying Isaac's singularity in various ways, but in doing so he has presented an Isaac that is more adult than boy, having virtue and character "beyond his years."

A subtle heightening of Isaac's role is also seen in Isaac's exercise of piety in bearing the fire and wood:

But, when...[Abraham] saw the appointed place afar off, he bade his servants stay there, but gave his son the fire and wood to carry; for he thought it good that the victim himself should bear the load of the instruments of sacrifice, a light burden indeed, for nothing is less toilsome than piety. (171)

In Genesis itself, Isaac neither carries the fire nor exercises obvious piety. Philo continues with a phrase that hints at Isaac's equality with

⁸ Trans. Colson, LCL.

⁹ Colson translates ἀγαπητός here as "dearly-cherished."

Abraham in the affair: "They walked with equal speed of mind rather than body along the short straight road at the end of which is holiness and came to the appointed place" (172).

Yet Philo presents neither Abraham's express declaration to Isaac that he is to be the sacrifice nor, therefore, any assent on the part of Isaac. Instead, Philo's Abraham says, "'Child, God will provide Himself a victim, even in this wide desert, which perhaps make you give up hope of finding it; but know that to God all things are possible, including those that are impossible or insuperable to men'" (175). Abraham's reply thus hints to Isaac at his role as victim. Isaac has no time to respond, however, for "as [Abraham] said this, he hastily seized his son, laid him on the altar and with his drawn knife in his right hand was preparing with it to deal the death blow" (176). Isaac is not bound and thus the mention of haste serves to emphasize Abraham's obedience, not to imply that Isaac would have proven craven had he been informed. Abraham is so dead-set on obedience to the command that "twice [God] called the father by name to turn him and draw him back from his purpose and thus prevent his carrying out the slaughter" (176).

Philo then launches into a defense of Abraham's actions, comparing it to human sacrifice and self-immolation among other nations. In doing so, he again calls Isaac an only and beloved son (ὃν δὲ μόνον τις ἔσχεν ἀγαπητὸν διδοὺς λόγου παντὸς μείζον ἔργον διαπράττεται, 196).¹⁰ He also describes the event as a proper sacrifice, a whole burnt offering with Abraham as priest and Isaac as victim: "But here we have the most affectionate of fathers himself beginning the sacrificial rite as priest with the very best of sons for the victim. Perhaps too, following the law of burnt offering (ὀλοκαύτωμα), he would have dismembered his son and offered him limb by limb" (198). Elsewhere Philo describes the virtuous Isaac as the paradigm of the victims of the whole burnt offering as well:

But there are some powers which are pure from evil through and through, and these we must not mutilate by severing into their parts. These are like the undivided sacrifices, the whole burnt-offerings (ὀλοκαύτωματα) of which Isaac is a clear example (παράδειγμα), whom God commanded to be offered in victim's fashion, because he had no part or lot in any passion which breeds corruption.¹¹ (*Sacr.* 110)

¹⁰ Colson translates ἀγαπητός here as "darling."

¹¹ Trans. Colson and Whitaker, LCL.

In sum, Philo presents an Isaac who is more mature and more involved in the affair than the Isaac of Genesis, but his portrayal does not approach the explicit and vigorous depictions we find in other texts. Significant is his association of the Akedah with the whole burnt offering and his description of Isaac as only and begotten son, as well as his general emphasis in other texts on Isaac as son of God, begotten, not created.

5.2 PSEUDO-PHILO'S

LIBER ANTIQUITATUM BIBLICARUM (L.A.B.)

Pseudo-Philo's *L.A.B.* makes explicit reference to the Akedah three times without directly rewriting Gen 22. The most salient aspect of *L.A.B.*'s appropriation of the Akedah is a willing Isaac, but *L.A.B.* also associates the Akedah with prominent apocalyptic and theophanic elements and may invest the Akedah with expiatory significance.

5.2.1 *Dating L.A.B.*

Deciding whether *L.A.B.* was composed prior to or after 70 C.E. is a vexed issue.¹² On one hand, *L.A.B.* presents no explicit references to the temple's destruction, such as one finds in *2 Baruch* and *4 Ezra*; on the other hand, certain passages can be taken to indicate the temple is gone (11:8; 12:9; 19:4; 22:5–6). The *crux interpretum* is 19:7, in which God says to Moses that foreign enemies will encircle, breach and take "the place where they will serve me" on "the seventeenth day of the fourth month," Tammuz.¹³ Howard Jacobson, endorsing the position of M. R. James, Leopold Cohn and others, believes this refers to the fall of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 C.E., since the ninth of Tammuz is the date of the fall of the first temple in Scripture (Jer 39:2, 52:6; cf. 2 Kgs

¹² See Emil Schürer, et al., eds., *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)* (3 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973–1987), 3:328–29; Fisk, *Do You Not Remember? Scripture, Story and Exegesis in the Rewritten Bible of Pseudo-Philo* (JSPSup 37; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 34–40; Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (2 vols.; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 2:199–210; Frederick J. Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo: Rewriting the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 6; and Eckhart Reinmuth, *Pseudo-Philo und Lukas: Studien zum Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum und seiner Bedeutung für die Interpretation des lukanischen Doppelwerks* (WUNT 74; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1994), 17–26.

¹³ All translations of *L.A.B.* are from Jacobson.

25:2–4); the seventeenth finds no mention.¹⁴ Jacobson suggests the persecutions under Hadrian or the period after the Bar-Kochba revolt as possible times of composition, since they would match the general atmosphere of “catastrophe and gloom” in *L.A.B.*¹⁵

Israel endured many other periods of catastrophe and gloom, however, and 19:7 may allude to the seizure of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus IV, or Pompey.¹⁶ Harrington argues Antiochus fits well in light of 1 Macc 1 and *m. Ta'an.* 4.6: “On the 17th day of Tammuz the Tables were broken, and the Daily Whole-offering ceased, and the City was breached, and Apostomos burnt the Law, and an idol was set up in the Sanctuary.”¹⁷ Given the difficulties surrounding *L.A.B.* 19:7, Frederick Murphy’s judgment is to be cautiously received:

Works written after the war, specifically 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, show a marked preoccupation with this momentous event. It seems unimaginable that Pseudo-Philo could have written such a long work without that disaster leaving a more recognizable mark. This tips the balance of evidence, sparse as it is, to a pre-70 C.E. date.¹⁸

Determining *L.A.B.*’s date is not absolutely crucial, however, for the aspects of the Akedah it presents are not innovations: “Even if the post-70 hypothesis is adopted, most of the exegetical traditions used by the author should be traced back to the Second Temple era. The date of redaction of a work re-employing pre-existing material indicates the *terminus ante quem* of the latter.”¹⁹ Further, in the three instances in which the Akedah appears (Balaam’s encounter with God [18:5], Deborah’s Song [32:1–4], and the sacrifice of Jephthah’s daughter [40:2]), it functions as an *explanans*, not an *explanatum*, and thus is not an innovation, but a resource; the particular appropriations of the Akedah in *L.A.B.* reveal that aspects of the Akedah therein had widespread cultural currency, particularly the figure of a willing Isaac.

¹⁴ Jacobson, *Commentary*, 1:202–05; see Leopold Cohn, “An Apocryphal Work Ascribed to Philo of Alexandria,” *JQR* (1898): 326–27; and M. R. James and Louis H. Feldman, *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo* (New York: Ktav, 1971), 29–33.

¹⁵ Jacobson, *Commentary*, 2:208–10.

¹⁶ See Daniel J. Harrington’s introduction to *L.A.B.* in *OTP*, 2:299.

¹⁷ Trans. Danby; see Harrington, review of Jacobson, *Commentary*, *JQR* 86 (1996): 458; and idem, “Text and Biblical Text in Pseudo-Philo’s *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1969), 167–74.

¹⁸ Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 6. *L.A.B.* may itself be a source for 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch: see Harrington, “Text and Biblical Text,” 174–81; M. R. James, *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo* (London: SPCK, 1917), 46–59; and Fisk, *Do You Not Remember*, 37.

¹⁹ Schürer, *HJP*, 3:329.

5.2.2 *Balaam's Divine Encounter*

L.A.B. presents Balaam positively; he is hesitant to curse the Israelites (18:3) and requests divine enlightenment (18:4). God replies to his request,

Was it not concerning this people that I spoke to Abraham in a vision, saying, 'Your seed will be like the stars of the heaven,' when I lifted him above the firmament and showed him the arrangements of all the stars? I demanded his son as a burnt offering and he brought him to be placed on the altar. But I gave him back to his father and, because he did not object, his offering was acceptable before me, and in return for his blood I chose them. (18:5)

Three issues confront the interpreter: the nature of the blessing and covenant; Isaac's willingness; and the significance of Isaac's blood.

First, *L.A.B.* combines Gen 15 with Gen 22:17 here. Jacobson notes that from "the story of the establishment of the covenant between God and Abraham at Gen 15...comes Abraham's surveying of the stars (15:5, with the comparison of the multitude of the stars to Abraham's descendants) and also the setting of the scene as a 'vision.'"²⁰ Here, then, the Akedah is firmly bound up with the Abrahamic promise and the covenant.²¹

Second, this passage presents an active, willing Isaac. The antecedent of "he" in "he did not object" is Isaac.²² (1) Isaac's blood is at issue, and parallelism supports reading Isaac as the antecedent: *et, quia non contradixit...et pro sanguine eius*. (2) In 40:2 it is clearly Isaac who does not refuse (*non contradixit* in both loci). (3) Isaac explicitly consents in 32:3. (4) This reading "has the particular virtue of emphasizing Isaac's role, as the roles of Abraham and Jacob are emphasized in this passage."²³

Third, the import of the intriguing phrase *pro sanguine eius* is elusive. In 32:4 it is stated that Isaac's sacrifice was interrupted, so it is unlikely

²⁰ Jacobson, *Commentary*, 1:582.

²¹ Like *Jubilees*, *L.A.B.* considers the covenant unitary and comprehensive. See Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 244–45.

²² Pace Davies and Chilton, "Aqedah," 528.

²³ Jacobson, *Commentary*, 2:583. *L.A.B.* 18:5–6 reads, "Then I [God] said to the angels of the service, 'Was it not of this man that I said, "I will reveal everything I am doing to Abraham [lacuna]...and of Jacob his son, the third one whom I called first-born [primogenitum], who, when he wrestled with the angel who was in charge of hymns, did not let go until he blessed him"?'"

that the reader should envision Isaac's actual death. It is clear that Isaac's "blood" has beneficial effects, however, as the passage explicitly bases Israel's election on it. Expiation may be in view as well.²⁴ In 18:5, Isaac was to be a burnt offering (*holocaustomata*) and his offering (*oblatio*) was acceptable (*acceptabilis*); in 18:7, Balak states:

Behold I know that when you offer burnt offerings (*holocaustomata*) to God, God will be reconciled (*reconciliabatur*) with men. Now seek again from your Lord and beg with as many burnt offerings (*holocaustis*) as he wishes. But if he should forgive my wrongdoings (*propiciabitur malis meis*),²⁵ you will have your reward and God will receive (*accipiet*) his offerings (*oblationes*).

The verbal links suggest that Isaac's "blood," accomplished sacrifice or not, may have an atoning, expiatory function, in addition to grounding election.

5.2.3 Deborah's Song

Deborah's Song recounts Isaac's very words in a highly significant setting. The Song emphasizes Isaac's willingness, ties the Akedah to the cosmic and apocalyptic, sets it in the context of deliverance, and ascribes to it expiatory value.

Angelic jealousy (32:1b) precipitates the frightening directive: "Since they were jealous of him, God said to him, 'Kill the fruit of your belly for me, and offer for me as a sacrifice what has been given to you by me'" (32:2a). Abraham then informs Isaac that he is to be offered as a holocaust and return to God (32:2b). Isaac responds:

Hear me, father. If a lamb of the flock is accepted as an offering to the Lord as an odor of sweetness and if for the sins of men animals are appointed to be killed, but man is designed to inherit the world, how is it that you do not say to me, "Come and inherit a secure life and time without measure"? What if I had not been born into the world to be offered as a sacrifice to him who made me? Now my blessedness will be above that of all men, because there will be no other. Through me nations will be blessed and through me the peoples will understand that the Lord has deemed the soul of man worthy to be a sacrifice. (32:3)

²⁴ Pace Fisk, "Offering Isaac," 506.

²⁵ Jacobson suggests that the Hebrew סלח may underlie *propiciabitur* by way of ἵλεως or ἱλάσκεσθαι (*Commentary*, 1:590).

In contrast to 18:5, where it is certain but implicit, at 32:3 Isaac's consent is explicit: "Isaac indirectly encourages Abraham to go through with the act: You should have told me that I am now going to inherit immortal life."²⁶

Less clear is what benefits result and through what mechanism. In 32:4 God states, "Now your [Abraham's] memory will be before me always, and your name and his [i.e., Isaac's] will remain from one generation to another." In 32:12–13, Deborah states:

...he has remembered both his recent and ancient promises and shown his saving power to us...go and tell the fathers in their chambers of souls and say, "The Most Powerful has not forgotten the least of the promises that he established with us saying, "Many wonders will I do for your sons."'

On the basis of these passages, Fisk claims that "Isaac's submissive cooperation is essential to the divine plan...God's continued blessing and protection of Israel under Moses, Joshua, and even Deborah cannot be separated from the fact that God continues to remember the names, and the piety, of Abraham and Isaac."²⁷

Isaac's cooperation is not considered beneficial in this context, however. In 32:4, Abraham's memory (*memoria tua*; note the singular) will remain before God. It is difficult to tell if the names of Abraham and Isaac will be "before God always," like Abraham's memory, or if both will merely be renowned among mortals (*et erit nomen tuum et huius in generationem et generationem*). Further, in 32:12–13 God remembers not Abraham's or Isaac's deed but rather God's own promises. In fact, Deborah's farewell address repudiates reliance on the fathers (and Deborah herself as a mother). The people say to Deborah, "Pray therefore for us, and after your death your soul shall be mindful of us forever" (33:4b). Deborah, however, responds: "While a man is still alive he can pray for himself and for his children, but after his death he cannot pray or be mindful of anyone. Therefore do not put trust in your fathers. For they will not profit you unless you are found to be like them" (33:5). This passage presents an exemplarist soteriology.²⁸

²⁶ Jacobson, *Commentary*, 2:864.

²⁷ Fisk, "Offering Isaac," 495.

²⁸ *L.A.B.* is not nearly as strict as *Jubilees*, however. God is merciful to Israel "as no one else has mercy" (35:3) and the covenant is unconditional: "Behold now the Lord will be favorably disposed to you today, not because of you but because of his covenant that he established with your fathers and the oath that he swore not to abandon

This passage situates the Akedah in the context of cosmic deliverance, a chief concern of chs. 31–32, with plentiful apocalyptic and theophanic references, but deliverance is not an effect of Abraham’s or Isaac’s deed. Rather, it is the stars who aid Israel. Deborah sees “the stars moving in their courses and preparing for battle on our side. I see too the shining stars that cannot be moved from their courses going forth to impede all the chariots of those who glory in the might of Sisera” (31:1). The stars act at the Lord’s behest:

When Deborah and the people and Barak went down to meet the enemies, immediately the Lord disturbed the movement of the stars. He said to them, “Hurry and go, for their enemies fall upon them. Confound their arms and let the strength of their heart be broken, because I have come that my people may prevail...”. When these words had been spoken, the stars went forth as they had been commanded and burned up their enemies...but they did not destroy Sisera, because so they had been commanded. (31:2)

Indeed, Deborah’s Song begins with a theophanic reference (“Behold the Lord has shown us his glory from on high,” [32:1]) and frequently refers to the role of the stars in Sisera’s defeat (32:11, 14, 15, 17 [if *astra*]).²⁹ The Akedah in *L.A.B.* is thus set in the context of heightened cosmic and theophanic activity, which in turn involves deliverance, which Deborah’s Song repeatedly celebrates: God took Abraham out of the fire and freed him from building the tower (31:1); the Lord prevented the slaying of Isaac (32:4); the Lord rescued the people from Egypt and brought them to Sinai (32:7); and the sun and moon stood still for Joshua (32:11). These serve as a prelude to the celebration of the deliverance from Sisera. After recounting the role of the stars in the protection of Israel and the defeat of Israel’s enemies (32:11), Deborah, Barak and the people sing praise for God’s deliverance (32:12–13), specifically “because he has remembered both his new and his old promises and displayed his deliverance to us” (32:12).

Thus, God’s maintenance of the covenant is central; if anyone or anything causes God to remember his covenant and be merciful, it is neither the fathers in general (who are dead, 30:7, 33:5), nor Abraham and Isaac, but rather the stars:

you...For your fathers are dead, but he who established the covenant with them is the living God” (30:7).

²⁹ Jacobson opts for *castra*, since the army of the Egyptians is mentioned in 32:16 (*Commentary*, 2:896–97).

...there will not again rise such a day on which the stars will band together and overcome the enemies of Israel as they were commanded. From this hour, if Israel falls into distress, it will call upon those witnesses along with their servants, and they will perform an embassy to the Most High, and he will remember that day and send the redemption of his covenant. (32:14)

The referents of “those witnesses” and “their servants” include the stars of 32:14, possibly the earth, heavens, lightning, angels and hosts of 32:13, and the “heaven and earth” and “sun, moon, and stars” of 32:9–10.³⁰ Above all, Deborah’s Song is a song of deliverance. In concluding she sings, “The people will remember this deliverance, and it will be a testimony for them... [God] has overthrown the army from its stations and defeated our enemies” (32:17). *L.A.B.* here thus emphasizes God’s promises and God’s maintenance of the covenant. As Deborah’s Song is a selective recollection of Israel’s history starting with God’s choosing of and deliverance of Abraham, it is best to see the Akedah therein as another instance of God’s deliverance and preservation of the covenant line, much like in *Jubilees*.

Expiation may indeed be in view, however. Isaac’s words regarding lambs as sweet offerings and animals sacrificed for sins may allude to the “various offerings brought to atone for sins of one sort or another,” such as recorded in Lev 4–6, 8–9, 16 and Num 28.³¹ Further, Isaac’s words “offer an interpretation of Gen 22:7–8, 13, in which Isaac is implicitly compared to ‘the lamb for a burnt offering (לֵעֹלָה).’”³² Finally, Isaac’s closing words (“the Lord has considered the life of a human being worthy [to be offered] in sacrifice”) may emphasize the sacrificial, atoning nature of his death, as Fitzmyer believes: “Isaac concludes that his death would have a vicarious, expiatory effect.”³³

Even if Isaac’s sacrifice were to have expiatory value, however, interpretive difficulties remain. For whom would the sacrifice be effective, and what is the import of “there will not be another”? *L.A.B.* 32:3 reads:

³⁰ Jacobson observes, “The notion of such intermediaries (usually angels) is not common in Jewish texts, but not as rare as sometimes believed (see e.g. *Shabbat* 12b, *Tobit* 12.12). But particularly surprising is the view that the heavens, earth and stars will serve as such intermediaries” (*Commentary*, 2:889–90).

³¹ Jacobson, *Commentary*, 2:864; see Fisk, “Offering Isaac,” 495.

³² Fisk, “Offering Isaac,” 495.

³³ Fitzmyer, “Sacrifice,” 224.

Erit autem mea beatitudo super omnes homines quia non erit aliud, et in me annuntiabantur generationes et per me intelligent populi, quoniam dignificavit Dominus animam hominis in sacrificium.

Jacobson believes that behind *in me annuntiabantur generationes* stood εὐαγγελίζω, itself a corruption of an earlier εὐλογίζω. Since Gen 22:18 concerns blessing, the hypothetical εὐλογίζω would represent an underlying בָּרַךְ, and behind *generationes* likely stood גוֹיִם or עַמִּים, “nations.”³⁴ The sacrifice would be valid not only for Israel but also for the nations. The adjacent phrase *intelligent populi* supports this idea, as *L.A.B.* is not particularly concerned with the good fortunes of the nations outside this verse in general and particularly in Deborah’s Song.³⁵

The phrase *intelligent populi* also provides interpretive leverage on *aliud*. Its antecedent is *sacrificium* from Isaac’s previous utterance (*Quid si non essem natus in seculo, ut offerer sacrificium ei qui me fecit?*), and the import is thus that the nations—Gentiles—will know that there will be no other sacrifice than that of Isaac. Davies and Chilton assert that *non erit aliud* “may well testify to the author’s awareness of Christian claims concerning Christ’s atonement as efficacious for all men,”³⁶ claims which in their view precipitated the development of the Akedah. Jacobson endorses the rudiments of their position but refines it in an intriguing direction:

We may well want to go further. This sounds like polemic against the Christian view that the sacrifice of Isaac was nothing more than a precursor of and model for the genuinely significant event that was the sacrifice of Jesus (e.g. *Ep. Barn.* 7.3, *Tert. Marc.* 18.2, *Aug. Civ.* 16.32, John Chrysost., *Hom. in Gen.* [PG 54, 432])...LAB seems to be saying, “Isaac is the only case of human sacrifice recognized by God; there is no other (i.e. Jesus).”³⁷

The devastating consequences for Davies’s and Chilton’s thesis must not be missed: they claim that the invention of the Akedah was an Amoraic reaction to *generic* Christian claims about Jesus’ atonement, whereas

³⁴ Jacobson, *Commentary*, 2:867–68.

³⁵ For instance, “He chose our nation and took Abraham our father out of the fire and chose him over all his brothers” (32:1). Further, like *Jubilees*, mixing with the nations (particularly with reference to exogamy) and idolatry are condemned (cf. 9:5; 18:13–14; 25:9–13; 34; 36:3; 38; 44).

³⁶ Davies and Chilton, “Aqedah,” 526 n. 31.

³⁷ Jacobson, *Commentary*, 2:867.

in fact early Christians were for Christological purposes *appropriating* aspects of the already existing Jewish Akedah. The Akedah thus was not invented in the Amoraic period as a reaction to Christian claims, even if certain rabbis developed and refined it in light of prior Christian appropriation.³⁸

5.2.4 Seila's Sacrifice

The story of the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter Seila appropriates the Akedah in a relatively unambiguous manner. *L.A.B.* here finds and exploits the "genuine symmetry"³⁹ between the two situations, which concern above all the willingness of both Isaac and Seila to consent to and participate in their respective immolations. Further, Seila's episode is set in the context of deliverance, much like Isaac's words in 32:3. Moreover, Seila is the fruit of Jephthah's belly (*in fructum ventris ipsius*, 39:11), as Isaac is the fruit of Abraham's (*fructum ventris tui*; 32:2, 4). *L.A.B.* stresses that Seila is a first-born and only-begotten child (*primogenitum*, 39:11; *unigenitus*, 40:1).⁴⁰ Like Isaac in 32:3 and the biblical account (Judg 11:36), Seila responds positively to her father's declaration:

Who is there who would be sad to die, seeing the people freed? Or have you forgotten what happened in the days of our fathers when the father placed the son as a burnt offering, and he did not dispute him (*et non contradixit ei*) but gladly gave consent to him (*sed epulans consensit illi*), and the one being offered was ready and the one who was offering was rejoicing (*et erat qui offerebatur paratus, et qui offerebat gaudens*)? . . . If I will not offer myself willingly for sacrifice, I fear that my death would not be acceptable and I would lose my life to no purpose. (*L.A.B.* 40:2, 3b)

Levenson observes, "by recounting the allusion to the aqedah in the mouth of Seila rather than Jephthah, the narrator has also shifted the focus from Abraham, the hero of the biblical story, to Isaac, the

³⁸ This does not necessarily mean that *L.A.B.* is to be dated late. Rather, it would demonstrate that early Christians were familiar with and appropriating Jewish traditions of the Akedah. Since earliest Christianity is a Jewish phenomenon, and since (as we have seen) radical interpretations of the Akedah occurred early (e.g., *Jubilees* and 4Q225), *prima facie* the earliest Christians would have been familiar with those interpretations.

³⁹ Fisk, "Offering Isaac," 497.

⁴⁰ *Unigenitus*, interestingly, is the word the Vulgate uses for rendering יִחְיָא from Gen 22:2, 12, and 16, for which the LXX uses ἀγαπητός.

son who with joy and equanimity now looks upon his impending immolation.”⁴¹

The shift softens the biblical story by comparing Seila’s sacrifice to that of a patriarchal paradigm and demonstrates that the concept of a willing Isaac was no innovation but a well-established resource. In 40:3 Seila speaks of her sadness, and in 40:5 Seila seems hesitant, viewing her death as a tragedy: “But let my life not be taken in vain. May my words go forth to the heavens...in order that a father not venture to sacrifice a daughter...and a ruler not let his only daughter be promised for sacrifice.” Seila’s comparison of her plight with Isaac’s functions to soften the impact of the narrative.⁴² The Akedah would be rhetorically effective here only if the tradition of a willing Isaac had wide cultural currency.

Fisk strongly suggests that “the value or merit attached to each sacrifice” is a chief reason Seila and Isaac are linked.⁴³ *L.A.B.* has already connected the Akedah to deliverance and possibly expiation, and Seila’s first words to her father are “Who is there who would be sad to die, seeing the people freed?” (40:2). In Fisk’s view, these words “associate her own death with Israel’s liberation.”⁴⁴ Further clues may indicate that Seila’s self-offering was meritorious. In 40:3 Seila utters the phrase “give back my soul” (to God) twice. Seila’s further words in 40:3 evince a concern for God’s acceptance of her deed. Finally, in 40:4 God states he will remember Seila’s sacrifice: “her death will be precious to me always” (cf. Ps 116:15 and *L.A.B.* 32:4).

L.A.B. takes pains to downplay any benefits of Jephthah’s vow and Seila’s willingness, however. *L.A.B.* 39:11 reads in part, “Now let Jephthah’s vow be accomplished...I [God] however will free my people at this time, not on his account but because of the prayer that Israel prayed,” a prayer for deliverance found four verses earlier (39:7). Further, although in 40:3 Seila worries that lack of willingness would make her lose her life “to no purpose” (*in vano*), in 40:5 she worries that she will lose her life “in vain” (*in vano*) if her sacrifice does not prevent future human sacrifice.

⁴¹ Levenson, *Death and Resurrection*, 190.

⁴² Further, in *L.A.B.* 40:4 God states that Seila’s sacrifice is part of the divine plan, that it is her request, that her death “will be precious before me always,” and that “she will go and depart into the bosom of her mothers.”

⁴³ Fisk, “Offering Isaac,” 499.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

What of the tension between the hints that Seila's and Isaac's sacrifices are meritorious on one hand and *L.A.B.*'s apparent discomfort with human sacrifice on the other? The solution is to remove merit from the equation. None of the phrases adduced to suggest that Seila's offering was meritorious need be interpreted as such. The association of Seila's death with Israel's liberation occurs after that liberation, and, in any case, God has already stated that the deliverance of Israel resulted from prayer, not sacrifice. Further, the language of giving back the soul to God, God's acceptance of the deed, and God's regarding her death as precious need not imply a view of meritorious, vicarious, expiatory atonement. In 32:3, where Isaac is concerned, these elements may very well be present, but in chapter 40 they seem conspicuous by their absence.

This, however, is what one would expect in light of the phrase *non erit aliud* (32:3): Isaac's sacrifice is the sacrifice *par excellence*. In appropriating the Akedah to rewrite Seila's sacrifice, *L.A.B.* is most explicit about Isaac's and Seila's willingness; connections concerning "value or merit" or expiation are tenuous at best. Thus, the Akedah functions to give Jephthah's daughter Seila the dignity of causality, as it were, softening the biblical account by rooting it in patristic precedent. If this is so, that precedent must have been deeply rooted in Jewish tradition and widely known. *L.A.B.* assumes the concept of a willing Isaac; it is not Ps.-Philo's own innovation. It is brought into the passage as an *explanans*, not an *explanatum*, suggesting its wide common cultural currency.

5.2.5 Summary: The Akedah in *L.A.B.*

While *L.A.B.* makes no connection between the Akedah and the Temple Mount nor any significant connection to Passover, *L.A.B.* does emphasize cosmic and theophanic elements. As regards soteriology, the import of the Akedah is ambiguous at best. The only indisputable benefit secured by the Akedah is election (18:5). Deborah explicitly repudiates any doctrine of patriarchal merit (33:4–5; cf. 30:7), and God remembers the covenant with the people on God's own initiative (32:12–13); should intercession be required, heavenly luminaries undertake an astral embassy to remind God of the covenant (32:14). The intriguing possibilities regarding expiation remain merely suggestive; *L.A.B.* does not exploit them to any significant degree.

The most remarkable and consistent feature of *L.A.B.*'s presentation of the Akedah, then, is the robust emphasis on Isaac's willingness. All

three pertinent passages present an Isaac willing to go to his death, and the nature of the presentation in each case reveals that traditions of the Akedah had significant common currency and deep roots in the Jewish interpretive tradition: in each case, it is appropriated as a resource, not presented as an innovation. Even if *L.A.B.* were in fact relatively late (70–135 C.E.), its particular manner of appropriation of the Akedah shows that the concept of a willing Isaac was a relatively early phenomenon.

5.3 4 MACCABEES

In appropriating the Akedah as the patriarchal paradigm of martyrdom, 4 Maccabees appropriates an Isaac who, by his devout reason, willingly and obediently faced his sacrificial death with the utmost courage. Further, the deaths of the martyrs in 4 Maccabees effect atonement and deliverance, suggesting that Isaac's obedience had expiatory value.

5.3.1 *Dating 4 Maccabees*

4 Maccabees can be dated with reasonable confidence between 19 and 72 C.E., as Elias Bickerman's fundamental arguments remain valid. In 2 Macc 3:5, Apollonius is στρατηγός of Coelesyria and Phoenicia, but in 4 Macc 4:2 Apollonius is στρατηγός of Syria, Phoenicia, and Cilicia. Since ancient writers (such as Josephus) often change "an antiquated title found in his source in order to modernize the narration and to make it clearer to his reader," Bickerman asserts that "we may take for granted that when the writer of 4 Maccabees uses the term 'Syria, Phoenicia, Cilicia' to designate the province of Apollonius, he employs the official nomenclature of his own time."⁴⁵ Bickerman finds evidence in Tacitus' *Annals* that Syria and Cilicia were separate as late as 18 C.E. (2.58), subsequently joined, and then separated again as early as 55 C.E. (13.8; 14.26). Therefore, Tacitus' passages "place the composition of IV Macc. between 18 and 55 C.E., that is about 35 C.E. with a scope of fifteen years or so in either direction."⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Elias J. Bickerman, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History* (3 vols.; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976–1986), 1:278. Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 11.22.

⁴⁶ Bickerman, *Studies*, 1:280–81. He further proposes that "[t]he absence of any allusion to the persecution of Caligula suggests the date before 38 C.E., that is in the twenties or thirties" (1:280 n. 29). With regard to the *terminus ante quem*, Bickerman

The latter date, however, is too early. While J. W. van Henten's arguments for dating 4 Maccabees to 100 C.E. are not finally compelling,⁴⁷ he does show that Syria and Cilicia were separated not in 55 C.E. but in 72 C.E. by Vespasian.⁴⁸ Even if van Henten's later dating were accepted, however, the aspects of the Akedah that 4 Maccabees displays certainly predate the document. As is the case with *L.A.B.*, the references to Isaac's willing conduct at the Akedah are brief but certain and function as a resource appropriated, not a novelty introduced, therefore indicating the common currency of a willing Isaac in the first century C.E.

contends that the terms νομικός (4 Macc 5:4; cf. γραμματεὺς in 2 Macc 6:18) and θρησκεία reflect the age of Augustus and later (1:276–277; see 1:276 n. 9).

⁴⁷ Jan W. van Henten, "Datierung und Herkunft des Vierten Makkabäerbuches," in *Tradition and Re-interpretation in Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (ed. Jan W. van Henten, et al.; Studia post-Biblica 36; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 136–49. His arguments: First, the spiritual conception of the *Vaterland* implies a post-70 C.E. date. Second, Urs Breitenstein's statistical vocabulary analysis points to the early second century C.E. (*Beobachtungen zu Sprache, Stil und Gedankengut des Vierten Makkabäerbuchs* [Basel: Schwabe, 1978]). Third, 4 Maccabees has substantive similarities with pagan death genres such as the "ἐπιτάφιος λόγος, der Tod des Philosophen, die Überlieferung über die devotio des römischen Feldherrn und die alexandrinischen Märtyrerakte," but especially to Christian martyrologies, particularly that of Ignatius, which suggests an early second century C.E. date. The thesis is problematic on all points: Jews spiritualized space well before 70 C.E. (e.g., Paul and Philo; see Jacob Freudenthal, *Die Flavius Josephus beigelegte Schrift Ueber die Herrschaft der Vernunft [IV Makkabäerbuch]: eine Predigt aus dem ersten nachchristlichen Jahrhundert* [Breslau: Schletter, 1869], 112–13). Breitenstein's thesis depends on words which are actually "compound forms or new grammatical forms of earlier existing words" (David deSilva, *4 Maccabees* [Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998], 17). Similarities with pagan reflections on death prove little, and Ignatius likely knew 4 Maccabees. The latter employs ἀντίψυχον twice (6:29; 17:21), while Ignatius uses this obscure word four times (*Eph.* 21.1; *Smyrn.* 10.2; *Pol.* 2.3, 6.1). Further, although Ignatius is to be thrown to beasts, he describes his coming ordeal in the common terms of professional torture ("fire," "cross," "wrenching of bones, hacking of limbs, crushings of my whole body...cruel tortures," *Rom.* 5.3) much like Eleazar (4 Macc 5:32; see Sam K. Williams, *Jesus' Death as Saving Event: The Background and Origin of a Concept* [Harvard Dissertations in Religion 2; Missoula: Scholars Press for Harvard Theological Review, 1975], 236–38; deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, 149–50; W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* [New York: New York University Press, 1967], 151–52; and Othmar Perler, "Das vierte Makkabäerbuch, Ignatius von Antiochien und die ältesten Märtyrerberichte," *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 25 [1949]: 47–72).

⁴⁸ Bickerman rejected this, believing the separation current already in Nero's time (*Studies*, 1:280), but van Henten rightly points out that Bickerman misinterpreted Tacitus' *Annals* 13.8, which mentions nothing about 'eine grössere, geschweige definitive Trennung von Syrien und Kilikien' (van Henten, "Datierung und Herkunft," 142); western Cilicia was administered by the Roman governor of Syria until Vespasian united Cilicia in a single province (*ibid.*, 139–42; cf. Suetonius, *Vesp.* 8.4).

5.3.2 *The Akedah as Intertextual Resource in 4 Maccabees*

Isaac first finds mention in an encomium to Eleazar, who “became young again in spirit through reason (λογισμός), and by reason like that of Isaac (τῷ Ἰσακίῳ λογισμῷ) he rendered the many-headed rack ineffective” (7:13–14).⁴⁹ The chief thesis of 4 Maccabees is that “devout reason (ὁ εὐσεβὴς λογισμός) is sovereign over the emotions” (1:1, 13). Devout reason is “the mind which with sound logic prefers the life of wisdom” found in the law (1:15–17). The martyrs’ rational endurance led them to obey the law, to prefer death and eternal life (cf. 7:19, 13:7, 16:25) to apostasy, implying, therefore, that an active, willing Isaac used his devout reason to face his sacrifice.

But did Isaac actually perish? In chapter 13, 4 Maccabees uses the examples of the seven brothers to illustrate the chief thesis: “Since, then, the seven brothers despised sufferings even unto death, everyone must concede that devout reason is sovereign over the emotions” (13:1). 4 Macc 13:8–12 then relates the brothers’ mutual encouragement:

They formed a holy choir of piety as they encouraged each other with the words, “Let us die like brothers all, brothers, for the Law’s sake. Let us follow the example of the three youths in Assyria, who despised the same trial by ordeal in the furnace. Let us not be pusillanimous in the demonstration of true piety.” “Courage, brother!” said one, and another, “Hold on nobly!” And another, recalling the past, said, “Remember whence you came and at the hand of what father Isaac gave himself to be sacrificed for piety’s sake.”

In Greek, the last phrase is μνήσθητε πόθεν ἔστέ ἢ τίνος πατὴρ χειρὶ σφαγιασθῆναι διὰ τὴν εὐσέβειαν ὑπέμεινεν Ἰσαακ. Anderson’s translation in *OTP* given here is at best acceptable; that of the RSV/NRSV, however, is not. This latter reads, “Remember whence you came, and the father by whose hand Isaac would have submitted himself to being slain for the sake of religion.”⁵⁰ The verb ὑπέμεινεν is indicative, not subjunctive. Anderson’s translation of ὑπέμεινεν as “gave himself” is too ordinary; a better word would be “endure,” for ὑπομένω and ὑπομονή in 4 Maccabees are associated with enduring suffering and death, specifically the tortures of martyrdom (1:11; 5:23; 6:9; 7:9, 22; 9:6, 8, 22, 30; 15:30, 31, 32; 16:1, [8], 17, 19, 21; 17:4, 7, 10, 12, 17, 23).

⁴⁹ All translations are from Hugh Anderson in *OTP*, 2:544–64, unless otherwise noted.

⁵⁰ Emphasis mine.

Thus, the martyrs' endurance in their sacrificial deaths is portrayed as Isaac's endurance in his. But was it carried out? The indicative mood of ὑπέμεινεν suggests that it was, as well as the fact that the martyrs themselves exercise endurance unto death.

The next reference to the Akedah is similarly suggestive but sufficiently vague to prohibit a definite conclusion regarding Isaac's death. In the lengthy encomium praising the mother, 4 Maccabees relates that the mother "exhorted each one and persuaded them to die rather than transgress the commandment of God" (16:24) with these words:

Remember that it is for God's sake you were given a share in the world and the benefit of life, and accordingly you owe it to God to endure all hardship for his sake, for whom our father Abraham ventured boldly to sacrifice his son Isaac, the father of our nation; and Isaac, seeing his father's hand, with knife in it, fall down against him, did not flinch. (16:18–20)

What is certain is that Isaac is presented as a model of courage and endurance who willingly accepts his role in the sacrifice; the word Anderson translates "flinch" is πτήσσω, which the RSV and NRSV render "cower" and for which Liddell and Scott suggest "crouch" or "cower for fear."⁵¹ Interestingly, Euripides uses it twice with reference to cowering at an altar.⁵²

Another reference, however, strongly suggests that Isaac did endure death. In 4 Maccabees' recounting of the mother's delivering "principles" (δικαιώματα, 18:6) to her sons, she states that their father "taught you the law and the prophets. He read to you of Abel, slain by Cain, of Isaac, offered as a burnt offering (καὶ τὸν ὀλοκαυτούμενον Ἰσαακ), and Joseph, in prison" (18:10–11). On its face, read without assumptions about the "plain sense" of Gen 22, 4 Maccabees here indicates that "Isaac was actually offered as a burnt offering."⁵³

⁵¹ LSJ, 1548.

⁵² *Ion*, 1280–81; *Herc. fur.* 972–74.

⁵³ van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People: A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 152 n. 12; *pace* deSilva, *4 Maccabees: Introduction and Commentary on the Greek Text in Codex Sinaiticus* (Septuagint Commentary Series; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2006), 259. Further, other references in the mother's speech in 4 Macc 18:14–19 pertain to severe affliction and deliverance (Isa 43:2; Ps 34:19; Prov 3:18; Ezek 37:3), and in closing the mother refers to the "song of Moses" that teaches "I kill and I make alive" (Deut 32:39). This is in keeping with references throughout the letter to one of the rewards of endurance unto death, immortality, references that occur in close conjunction with references to Isaac. 4 Macc 7:18–19 states, "Only those who with all their heart make piety their first concern are able to conquer the passions of the flesh, believing that to God they do not die, as our

Therefore, while it is possible that 4 Maccabees envisions Isaac as having actually been sacrificed, it is absolutely clear that Isaac is envisioned as an active, willing participant in his own sacrifice, the patriarchal paradigm for the martyrs who go voluntarily to their deaths in obedience to God and the Law. But what do these deaths effect, if anything, and what can one infer about the effectiveness of Isaac's deed, or very death? 4 Maccabees presents a robust doctrine of vicarious expiatory atonement; the deaths of the martyrs atone for sin, avert the divine wrath, defeat the tyrant, purify the land, and restore peace.

4 Maccabees operates with a conception of corporate guilt and responsibility:

In total disregard for the Law, Jason changed the nation's whole mode of life and its polity; not only did he lay out a gymnasium on the citadel of our native land but he also rescinded the service of the Temple. At this the divine justice was angered and brought Antiochus himself to war against them. When he was at war with Ptolemy in Egypt and heard that the people of Jerusalem took the greatest delight in a widespread rumor about his death, he promptly marched against them. (4:19–22)

Jason's apostasy provokes the divine wrath against the people as a whole, even though the people remain steadfast. In spite of Antiochus' decree that "all who were seen to conform to their ancestral Law must die," 4 Maccabees relates that "he failed completely to destroy our people's respect for the law" (4:23–24; cf. 18:5: Antiochus "failed absolutely to compel the people of Jerusalem to adopt the pagan way of life, and to forsake the customs of their fathers"). Nevertheless, the nation as a whole is implicated in the leadership's apostasy. Eleazar prays that his martyrdom would be seen as a punishment making satisfaction for the people (6:28). More explicitly, the narrator in 17:21 refers to the "sin of the nation" (τῆς τοῦ ἔθνους ἀμαρτίας). In short, Jason's apostasy provokes the divine wrath upon the people as a whole, the agent of which is Antiochus. This is the plight of the nation.

patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob died not, but live to God." In 13:17, the brothers are encouraged by the hope of immortality: "After death in this fashion Abraham and Isaac and Jacob will receive us, and all our forefathers will praise us." In 16:25 it is stated that the brothers "knew full well themselves that those who die for the sake of God live unto God, as do Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the patriarchs." Like the martyrs, it may be that Isaac is the paradigm of one who died for the sake of God and thus lives to God, one whom God killed and made alive.

The solution is found in the voluntary, vicarious and atoning deaths of the martyrs. When Eleazar is at the point of death, he prays,

You know, O God, that though I could have been saved myself I am dying in these fiery torments for the sake of the Law. Be merciful to your people (ἵλεως γενοῦ τῷ ἔθνει σου) and let our punishment be a satisfaction on their behalf (ἄρκεσθεις τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν δίκη). Make my blood their purification (καθάρσιον) and take my life as a ransom for theirs (ἀντίψυχον αὐτῶν λαβὲ τὴν ἐμὴν ψυχὴν). (6:27–29)

Eleazar's death is voluntary; had he wished, he could have escaped torture altogether by heeding Antiochus' plea to eat swine's flesh and so save himself (5:6; cf. 6:12–15). Sam Williams notes that the martyrs of 4 Maccabees, unlike sacrificial animals, "are not passive victims; on the contrary, they are given every opportunity to renounce their religion and escape the tortures."⁵⁴ Their willingness to die is the fruit of their obedience unto death for the sake of the law, and this obedience plays a key role in the theology of atonement operative in 4 Maccabees: "It is not the human blood itself that atones, but the obedience of these human beings unto death that God accepts as a perfect sacrifice... It is a representative obedience, an obedience maintained on behalf of others... so that their deaths readily take on more of the colouration of a sacrificial act."⁵⁵

David deSilva's language in the last phrase reflects interpretive uncertainty regarding the mechanism of the efficacy of the martyrs' deaths. In language reflecting Eleazar's prayer in 6:27–29, the narrator in 17:20–22 states:

These then, having consecrated themselves for the sake of God, are now honored not only with this distinction but also by the fact that through them our enemies did not prevail against our nation, and the tyrant was punished and our land purified (καθαρισθῆναι), since they became, as it were (ὥσπερ), a ransom (ἀντίψυχον) for the sin of our nation. Through the blood of these righteous ones and through the propitiation of their death (διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τῶν εὐσεβῶν ἐκείνων καὶ τοῦ ἱλαστηρίου τοῦ θανάτου αὐτῶν) the divine providence (ἡ θεία πρόνοια) rescued (διέσωσεν) Israel, which had been shamefully treated.

While the language in 6:27–29 and 17:20–22 is highly sacrificial, it may be purely metaphorical. Williams maintains that the martyrs' endurance

⁵⁴ Williams, *Jesus' Death as Saving Event*, 185–86.

⁵⁵ deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, 140.

(ὑπομονή, ὑπομένω) is merely exemplary; it causes the tyrant Antiochus to give up and depart and thus effects the “purification” of the land.⁵⁶ 4 Macc 1:11 states that the martyrs’ endurance (ὑπομονή) amazed not only all humankind but also their torturers, “and so they became responsible for the downfall of the tyranny which beset our nation, overcoming the tyrant by their fortitude so that through them their own land was purified.” In 17:23, it is related that Antiochus himself was so impressed with the endurance of the martyrs, he commended them as models to his soldiers. Shortly thereafter it is related that “it was because of them [the martyrs] that our nation enjoyed peace—they revived the observance of the Law in their land and repulsed their enemies’ siege” (18:4). Having failed to compel the people of Jerusalem to paganize and apostatize, Antiochus simply “departed from Jerusalem and marched away against the Persians” (18:5).

The inspiring endurance of the martyrs may have merely frustrated Antiochus’ plans to Hellenize Jerusalem and caused him to withdraw. Williams asserts that “the specifically religious categories used to express the effect and meaning of the martyrs’ deaths in 6:28–29 (and 17:21–22) . . . supplement the central assertion that the deaths were effective and beneficial for the nation in that Antiochus departed.”⁵⁷ Williams thus finds an exemplarist soteriology; the martyrs’ deaths precipitate Antiochus’s departure and revive the observance of the law. The religious categories are not ultimately significant, for “It is only when the author explicitly ascribes the nation’s deliverance to God—as is only fitting for an aspiring philosopher to do (see 1:1–2!)—that he employs specifically religious-cultic concepts and terminology.”⁵⁸

Williams’s interpretation is the fruit of close, critical reading. Yet in the end his suggestions do not take sufficient account of the significant references to the divine justice and providence (4:21; 17:22) or provide a compelling rationale for the use of sacrificial language. For Williams, ὥσπερ in 17:21 indicates that all the sacrificial language is metaphorical,⁵⁹ and the reality behind the metaphor concerns an exemplary soteriology. In light of the focus on the divine justice and providence (that is, on God’s agency), however, it is better to understand the martyrs’ deaths as actually expiatory. As deSilva asserts,

⁵⁶ Williams, *Jesus’ Death as Saving Event*, 165–82.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 178.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 179.

the death of the martyrs is the instrument of reconciliation or atonement between God and “Israel, which previously had been mistreated”. True, this is not a sacrifice prescribed by the Torah, but the obedience that remains steadfast even unto death is accepted by God as (*hōsper*) a sin offering: its effectiveness in achieving atonement, or reconciliation, demonstrates that it is at least the “dynamic equivalent” of a sin offering.⁶⁰

It is not that the author simply uses religious language, but that God chooses to accept the obedience of the martyrs as an atoning sacrifice.

Even if Williams were correct about the author’s own internal view of the matter, however, 4 Maccabees as a text does indeed link expiatory vicarious atonement with the martyrs’ obedient deaths. As Williams himself notes,

Whatever the correct explanation for the dynamics underlying the formulation of this concept...having once been formulated it was there, a given conceptual entity with its own autonomous existence—incorporated in an address or embedded in a literary treatise, but nevertheless free to exert its powerful influence among Jews and Christians as an exciting new “doctrine.”⁶¹

That is, the text of 4 Maccabees made this concept available to be appropriated in various ways by Jews and Christians apart from the author’s express intention.

5.3.3 Summary: *The Akedah in 4 Maccabees*

In sum, 4 Maccabees presents an active, willing Isaac, whose obedience serves as a paradigm for the martyrs. Further, Isaac is likely envisioned as having endured death. Finally, while 4 Maccabees never explicitly ascribes atoning value to Isaac’s obedient sacrifice, it may be inferred (and may have been inferred by early Jews and Christians, seeing it “there”) from Isaac’s paradigmatic relationship with the martyrs that the Akedah possesses atoning significance: “Martyrdom is associated with vicarious atonement, while Isaac is pre-eminent among the martyrs.”⁶²

⁶⁰ deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, 138.

⁶¹ Williams, *Jesus’ Death as Saving Event*, 253. Emphasis original.

⁶² Segal, “The Akedah: Some Reconsiderations,” in *Geschichte—Tradition—Reflexion: Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag* (3 vols.; ed. Hubert Cancik, Hermann Lichtenberger and Peter Schäfer; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1996), 1:108.

5.4 JOSEPHUS' *ANTIQUITIES*

Josephus' *Antiquities* date to 95–96 C.E. The account of the Akedah therein is relatively straightforward. Josephus vividly depicts an Isaac eager to suffer sacrifice, expressly ties the event to Mount Moriah and connects Abraham's obedience to great blessing.

Isaac's willingness is the chief feature of Josephus' presentation of the Akedah, which, in presenting a heroic Isaac, Josephus emphasizes in more detail than most other witnesses: "it is the child that becomes the protagonist."⁶³ Abraham dearly loves (ὑπερηγάπα) Isaac, his only son (μονογενῆ) born of his old age (1.222). Isaac endears himself to his parents even more through his virtue, filial piety, and zeal for the worship of God (1.222). The Akedah is described as God's idea as a test of Abraham's piety (ὅς διάπειραν αὐτοῦ βουλόμενος λαβεῖν τῆς περὶ αὐτὸν θρησκείας; 1.223). Abraham evinces no hesitation in proceeding to fulfill the divine command, even concealing the matter from his wife and his whole household so that none can interfere (1.225).

In mentioning Isaac's query about that sacrifice, Josephus gives Isaac's age as 25 and states that Isaac asked the question while constructing the altar himself (1.227). Abraham does not yet inform Isaac that he is to be the offering, saying only that God would provide. This is a deft bit of foreshadowing; Josephus gives Isaac's age as 25 in order "to establish that Isaac was not a mere lad but a grown young man, and hence was able to make a deliberate choice as to whether he could consent to his being sacrificed,"⁶⁴ consent he will indicate a few lines further. Moreover, Isaac's construction of the altar further emphasizes his adulthood and active role in the sacrifice.

After the complete preparation of the altar Abraham informs Isaac he is to be sacrificed (1.228–231), encouraging him to "bear...this consecration valiantly"⁶⁵ (φέρει γενναίως τὴν καθιέρωσιν; 1.229), for it is fitting that one of extraordinary birth undergo a dramatic death (1.230–231), and it is God who will serve as Abraham's protector in his old age (εἰς κηδεμόνα καὶ γηρωκόμον; 1.231). Abraham thus accepts God's command without hesitation, being ready to sacrifice that most

⁶³ Feldman, "Josephus as a Biblical Interpreter: The 'Aqedah,'" *JQR* 75 (1985): 226.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁶⁵ All translations are from Thackeray, LCL.

dear to him, given him by God, and to trust in God's provision for the future.

Josephus then writes that Isaac, being born of such a father, was of necessity resolute (ἔδει τὸ φρόνημα εἶναι), and therefore "received these words with joy" (δέχεται πρὸς ἡδονὴν⁶⁶ τοὺς λόγους; 1.232). In a manner similar to the Isaac of *L.A.B.* 32.3, Josephus relates that Isaac

exclaimed that he deserved never to have been born at all, were he to reject the decision of God and of his father and not readily resign himself to what was the will of both, seeing that, were this the resolution of his father alone, it would have been impious to disobey. (*Ant.* 1.232)

Having expressed these noble sentiments, Isaac then rushes onto the platform of the altar to be slaughtered (ὤρμησεν ἐπὶ τὸν βωμὸν καὶ τὴν σφαγὴν; 1.232). God intervenes to halt the sacrifice, and confirms and expands the blessings to Abraham and his descendants.

Josephus thus stresses Isaac's willingness to a remarkable degree, which two omissions serve to heighten: Josephus makes reference neither to Isaac's binding nor to Abraham's placing him on the altar. Feldman writes:

Thus Josephus on the one hand avoided the implication that Isaac had to be tied, because, as the Rabbis (*Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer* 31) say, he might have shuddered at the sight of the knife and recoiled from the sacrifice, thus dishonoring his father and disobeying God, or because he might have struggled and thus rendered the sacrifice ritually unsuitable (*Gen. Rabbah* 56.8). Unlike the Rabbis, who thus indicate that even the patriarchs were human enough to be tempted to disobey, Josephus, here as elsewhere, paints his heroes larger than life and in this case above temptation.⁶⁷

While Josephus certainly emphasizes the willingness of Isaac, certain interpreters read too much into Josephus' account of Isaac's disposition at the Akedah. Vermes baldly and wrongly asserts, "the insistence on Isaac's merit... could not be more stressed,"⁶⁸ while Daly maintains that Josephus emphasizes not only the "obedient piety" but also the "meritorious achievement of the two heroes," of both Abraham and Isaac.⁶⁹ Merit, however, is a misleading term, particularly in regard to Isaac's role. Josephus presents here no developed concept of the "mer-

⁶⁶ Similarly, *1 Clem.* 31.3 employs ἡδέως to describe Isaac's willingness in going to his sacrifice.

⁶⁷ Feldman, "Josephus," 237.

⁶⁸ Vermes, "Redemption," 198.

⁶⁹ Daly, *Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice*, 48.

its of the fathers” or of vicarious atonement or expiation. Rather, the Akedah results in confirmation of the promises to Abraham, described by Josephus as perpetual care (ἐπιμέλεια) for Abraham and his race (γένος; 1.234). His son will live a long life and “bequeath to a virtuous and lawfully begotten offspring a great dominion” (1.234), who would “swell into a multitude of nations” and “subdue Canaan” (1.235). Having sacrificed the ram, Abraham and Isaac “returned home to Sarra and lived in bliss, God assisting them in all that they desired” (1.236).

Further, Josephus specifically ascribes these blessings and benefits to the obedience (ὑπακούω; 1.233) and devotion (θρησκεία; 1.234) of Abraham, not Isaac, an omission all the more striking given Josephus’ arresting portrayal of Isaac’s fearless conduct:

And the deed would have been accomplished, had not God stood in the way, for He called Abraham by name... He wished but to test his soul and see whether even such orders would find him obedient. Now that He knew the ardour and depth of his piety, He took pleasure in what He had given him and would never fail to regard with tenderest care both him and his race. (1.233–234)

Thus, while Josephus emphasizes Isaac’s active and willing role in his sacrifice, it has no explicit connection with merit or expiation or vicarious atonement, and it is Abraham’s behavior, not Isaac’s, that is explicitly commended and rewarded.

It is, however, considered a sacrifice, regarded by God as if actually accomplished. Further, as noted above, Josephus locates the event explicitly at the site of the temple. In 1.224 he states that God commanded Abraham to take Isaac εἰς τὸ Μώριον ὄρος. In 1.226 Josephus states that Abraham took his son on the third day “to that mount whereon king David afterwards erected the temple.” The Akedah here, as in *Jub.* 18:13 and 2 Chr 3:1, is connected to the temple and thus its sacrifices.

In summary, of chief significance is the vivid and detailed portrayal of a willing Isaac, an aspect present in the tradition as early as 4Q225. Josephus has not concocted this out of whole cloth,⁷⁰ and neither has Josephus crafted his account to counter Christian claims regarding Jesus.⁷¹ Josephus deals little with Christians, and his account of the

⁷⁰ As Vermes rightly notes, Josephus frequently “echoes traditional views” (Vermes, “New Light,” 145).

⁷¹ Any apologetic function concerns presenting a patriarchal portrait acceptable to pagan sensibilities (see Feldman, “Josephus,” 213).

Akedah contains nothing suggesting that Christian claims are in view. Finally, Josephus' omission of references to atonement may be the fruit of his tendency to avoid theological questions in general;⁷² the association of the Akedah with the Temple Mount is suggestive.

5.5 1 CLEMENT

1 Clement provides a fitting conclusion to this survey. Its relatively early date (the end of the first century C.E.)⁷³ and conspicuous reference to a willing Isaac confirms that early Christians knew of the willing Isaac as a Jewish datum apart from Christological appropriation thereof.⁷⁴

In *1 Clem.* 31:3, Clement asserts, "Isaac gladly allowed himself to be brought forward as a sacrifice, confident in the knowledge of what was about to happen" (Ἰσαὰκ μετὰ πεποιθήσεως γινώσκων τὸ μέλλον ἡδέως⁷⁵ προσήγετο θυσία). Nothing Christological whatsoever is said at this point; compare *Ep. Barn.* 7:3, where Isaac's passive offering is explicitly presented as a type of Christ's.⁷⁶ Isaac's deed here serves purely paranetic ends, as Clement is exhorting his audience to "cling to his blessing and discern the paths that lead to it" (*1 Clem.* 31:1). This

⁷² Ibid., 213, 232, 237, 240.

⁷³ Bart Ehrman rejects the traditional rationale for dating it to 95–96 ("misfortunes and setbacks" in 1:1 referring to supposed persecution under Domitian), but nevertheless accepts a date "sometime near the end of the first century, possibly, as traditionally thought, in the mid 90s during the reign of Domitian" in light of (1) references to the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul, described as "noble examples of our own generation" (5:1–7), (2) the assumption that certain leaders appointed by the apostles are still living (chs. 42, 44), and (3) the lack of reference to proto-orthodox hierarchical structures (introduction to *1 Clement*, in *The Apostolic Fathers* [2 vols.; LCL 24–25; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003], 1:24–25). Some scholars have placed it two decades earlier; see George Edmundson's Bampton lectures, *The Church in Rome in the First Century: An Examination of Various Controverted Questions Relating to Its History, Chronology, Literature and Traditions* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1913; repr., Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 187–205.

⁷⁴ While it is likely, in my view, that Gen 22 plays a significant and underappreciated role in early Christianity (apart from the Matthean passages to be discussed below and their synoptic parallels, consider, *inter alios*, John 1:29, 36; Rom 8:32; Jas 2:21; Heb 11:17), *1 Clem.* 31.3 is the earliest unambiguous Christian reference to a willing Isaac. (In *Ep. Barn.* 7:3, Isaac, the type of Christ, is a passive victim.)

⁷⁵ Compare Josephus' πρὸς ἡδονήν in *Ant.* 1.232.

⁷⁶ "[The Lord] himself was about to offer the vessel of the Spirit as a sacrifice for our own sins, that the type might also be fulfilled that was set forth in Isaac, when he was offered upon the altar (ἵνα καὶ ὁ τύπος ὁ γεγόμενος ἐπὶ Ἰσαὰκ τοῦ προσενηχθέντος ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον τελεσθῇ)" (trans. Ehrman, LCL).

suggests the tradition of a willing Isaac developed independent of any early Christian reflection.

“What was about to happen,” exactly? In *1 Clem.* 10 we find a reference to the Akedah in the conclusion to the presentation of Abraham’s life: “Because of his faith and hospitality, a son was given him in his old age; and in obedience he offered him up as a sacrifice to God (δι’ ὑπακοῆς προσήνεγκεν αὐτὸν θυσίαν τῷ θεῷ) on one of the mountains that he showed him” (10:7).⁷⁷ Read without subconscious or conscious assimilation to Gen 22 itself, this text may suggest Abraham actually sacrificed Isaac, and thus Isaac’s confidence in the face of “what was about to happen” would be all the more remarkable.

5.6 SUMMARY

The vivid and detailed presentations of the Akedah in rabbinic and targumic literature and the significant attention such literature has received have occasioned considerable misinterpretation of various documents and caused many scholars to see the Akedah as a late development. Careful examination of pertinent, early documents considered apart from rabbinic and targumic texts, however, reveals that significant aspects of the Akedah developed early, not only prior to the emergence of rabbinic Judaism but also prior to the emergence of Christianity. *Jubilees* presents the connection to Passover, the association with the Temple Mount, heightened apocalyptic and theophanic elements, and soteriological import (exemplarism, in particular). 4Q225 presents a willing Isaac, assuming the scholarly consensus regarding the reconstruction of the lacuna is correct. Thus, all major aspects of the Akedah are present in Judaism no later than 20 C.E. (the latest possible dating of 4Q225).

The most detailed, striking, significant and consistent aspect of the Akedah in documents examined in the present chapter is an active and willing Isaac. The manner of its presentation in *L.A.B.*, 4 Maccabees and *1 Clement*, in particular, reveals that it is a tradition of some antiquity appropriated and not a novelty recently created; even if *L.A.B.* and 4 Maccabees date from the early second century C.E., their concise

⁷⁷ Ehrman follows mss. A H S C here; L reads τὸ ὄρος ὃ. Were one to follow the latter here, τὸ ὄρος would likely refer to Mount Moriah, thus linking the Akedah and Temple Mount.

manner of presentation of the Akedah bears witness to the deep roots and widespread cultural currency of the aspect of a willing Isaac in the first century C.E.

Soteriological ramifications are varied, and, on balance, the import of the Akedah for merit, atonement and expiation in most documents remains ambiguous at best. 4 Maccabees presents the most robust doctrine of vicarious, expiatory atonement, but even there, the connection to the Akedah is implicit: the martyrs' deaths atone, while Isaac is their patriarchal paradigm. The other document which presents a consistent, coherent and discernible soteriology is *Jubilees*, and there it is a purely exemplarist soteriology focused solely on the figure of Abraham; neither Isaac nor expiation play any role.

In the following chapters we will see that the Matthean Jesus resembles the Isaac of the documents examined here: like Isaac, Jesus is a promised child conceived under extraordinary circumstances on whom depend the promises of God, the beloved Son of his Father who is willing to go to his sacrificial death ordained for him, a death connected in various ways to the temple, involving apocalyptic and theophanic phenomena and securing redemption.

CHAPTER SIX

THE FIGURE OF ISAAC IN THE FIRST CHAPTER OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

In previous chapters I have presented a model of interpretation that would give full consideration to both Matthean narrative dynamics (which permits adequate consideration of Matthean allusions) and the cultural encyclopedia within which the Gospel originated (which permits consideration of extrabiblical traditions). I have also demonstrated that five aspects of the Akedah important for the interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew were present in that encyclopedia. In this and the following exegetical chapters, I will examine several Matthean passages which may evoke the figure of Isaac. Since perceiving verbal allusions and echoes involves, in Hays's terminology, "recurrence" or "clustering," which, in turn, involves the process of cumulative reading, we will see that the further the Model Reader progresses through the Gospel, the clearer and more certain the Isaac typology becomes. Further, the typology involves not only Isaac and Jesus but also their respective holy families: Sarah is a type of Mary, while Abraham is a type of God the Father. Before attending to exegesis, however, a few preliminary observations, clarifications and reminders regarding the Gospel of Matthew and my approach are in order.

6.1 MATTHEAN PRELIMINARIES

First, the figure of Isaac need not displace or exclude other Matthean Christologies and typologies.¹ I am not claiming that Isaac is the most decisive figure for Matthean Christology. But given the depth and breadth of the Isaac typology, I would claim that Isaac is as significant

¹ This includes the figure of the Suffering Servant. While I will argue that the Servant metaconcept as defined by modern scholarship did not exist in Matthew's encyclopedia and is thus without meaning for investigating Matthean Christology, another option for scholars who consider the Servant figure decisive is to see the Servant and Isaac as figures operating in a complementary fashion in an intertextual fusion, even though in the history of scholarship they have in effect had to struggle with one another, with Isaac often the loser.

for Matthean Christology as any figure put forth in the history of Matthean scholarship. Birger Gerhardsson describes the Christology presented by the final form of the Gospel as “a synthetic, many-faceted picture of Christ, a picture which was illustrated with many kinds of material.”² My aim is simply to make room for Isaac, to demonstrate that Isaac is a significant figure for the Gospel of Matthew among other significant figures.

Second, on the theoretical model employed herein, the presence and potential value of Greek biblical versions (in helpful if misleading shorthand, “the LXX”) can be assumed. Being written in Greek, the Matthean text presupposes a Model Reader who is familiar with the Scriptures in Greek. Further, most scholars point to Syrian Antioch as the home of the Gospel’s composition and original reception, a city in which Greek and Greek Scriptures were not unknown.³ Finally, the Matthean text itself evinces familiarity with the Scriptures in Greek. Working within a traditional redaction-critical paradigm, Ulrich Luz notes:

Matthäus ist *stark durch die LXX bestimmt*...die Sprache des Matthäus [ist] durchweg bibelgriechisch geprägt. Er schreibt wohl nur zum Teil *bewußt* einen Septuaginta-Stil. Der Befund ist derselbe wie bei den alttestamentlichen Zitaten, deren Wortlaut bei Matthäus manchmal, aber selten konsequent näher bei der Septuaginta liegt als in seinen Quellen. Die Septuaginta bestimmt seine Sprache, ohne daß sie immer seine stilistische Norm wäre, der er bewußt folgt. Nur von ihr können wir mit Sicherheit sagen, daß er sie gelesen bzw. gehört hat.⁴

Luz thus maintains, “Die Bibel des Mt ist die LXX.”⁵ This is demonstrated not merely on the basis of slight changes to citations taken over

² Birger Gerhardsson, *The Mighty Acts of Jesus according to Matthew* (Scripta minora Regiae Societatis Humaniorum Litterarum Lundensis 1978–1979 5; Lund: Gleerup, 1979), 82.

³ For a discussion of the Gospel’s original location from a traditional historical-critical perspective, see Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 1:138–47. From a literary-critical perspective, using the implied reader of the Gospel of Matthew as an index of the intended readers, Kingsbury also opts for Antioch (*Matthew as Story* [2d ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988], 148).

⁴ Luz, *Matthäus*, 1:53. Emphasis original.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:195. Stanton, however, questions whether the LXX was the Bible of the Gospel’s author, believing fidelity to the LXX in the formula quotations either insignificant or not from the evangelist’s hand (“Matthew’s Use of the Old Testament,” 346–63). For the purposes of the present project, however, which seeks to investigate not the mind of the Gospel’s empirical author but the Matthean Model Reader, we are concerned with the form itself, not the genesis of that form, and the form evinces familiarity with the LXX.

from the Gospel of Mark, “sondern aus den von Mt selbst ergänzten und zugefügten Zitaten und aus der im ganzen von der LXX geprägten Sprache des MT.”⁶ Luz believes that the empirical author was probably familiar with the Scriptures in Greek due to his experience of them in worship,⁷ a conclusion which also Allison shares, who, in discussing the Gospel’s intended hearers, writes, “I assume that our Gospel was written for repeated use in an oral setting which also featured Scriptural readings from the LXX.”⁸ That the text of the Gospel would present verbal, syntactical allusions to Greek Scriptures is therefore highly probable.⁹

Third, in light of the model here employed, allusions and echoes are different not in degree or with regard to authorial intention, as if allusions were intentional and echoes subconscious or unintentional. Rather, *allusion* concerns *the precise degree of verbal, syntactical repetition with a precursor text*, while *echoes* concern *the effect of the allusions upon the Model Reader*, who may hear echoes not simply of the Scriptures *per se* but the Scriptures as interpreted in the encyclopedia of early Judaism.

Fourth, I shall draw on patristic texts on occasion to illustrate the general plausibility of certain conceptual connections between Jesus and Isaac. This does not imply that a particular patristic writer necessarily perceived a particular verbal allusion in the Matthean locus under discussion. Rather, the history of interpretation may help us as modern interpreters see possibilities and parallels heretofore overlooked as it expands our potential horizons of expectation.

Fifth, this raises the question of the significance of the Gospel of Mark for this study. On one hand, Mark may be irrelevant, for this is fundamentally a narrative study concerned with the interaction of the linear text manifestation of the Gospel of Matthew with the encyclopedia and the Model Reader produced thereby, not a redaction-critical study. Bringing Mark into the picture obscures the unique contours of the

⁶ Ibid., 1:195.

⁷ Ibid., 1:193.

⁸ Allison, “Anticipating the Passion: The Literary Reach of Matthew 26:47–27:56,” *CBQ* 56 (1994): 703. This article has been revised as an essay entitled “Foreshadowing the Passion,” in *Studies in Matthew*, 217–35.

⁹ While I have avoided speaking in terms of “the LXX” and opted to speak in terms of “versions” of the “Greek Scriptures,” there are in Gen 17 and Gen 22 no significant variants among textual witnesses that affect the determination of verbal allusions or that necessitate knowing precisely which version(s) of Greek Genesis was or were in use in the original Matthean congregation.

Matthean story and commits the redactional sins outlined previously. Again, redaction criticism leads to neglect of the text at hand as a holistic entity and thus is a poor way of determining an author's intention, since it ignores much of what an evangelist actually wrote.

Nevertheless, the Gospel of Mark, a most powerful, sublime and beautiful work in and of itself, may have existed in the encyclopedia in which the Gospel of Matthew operates—if one assumes the dominant two/four-source theory of synoptic relationships—and, given the similarities to the Gospel of Matthew, may have portions which the Model Reader should actualize or narcotize. If the Gospel of Mark does predate the Gospel of Matthew, we could indeed on the theory employed in the present project say that the latter contains very many precise verbal, syntactical allusions to the former with which the Model Reader has to deal.¹⁰

It is my considered opinion that the question of Markan vs. Matthean priority is intractable and thus still open, however. Every criterion employed to decide the question involves problematic assumptions that can in almost every instance be falsified by the data of the Gospels themselves. Consider the criterion of Christology. Is it accurate to say that Christology rises in a rough trajectory from lower to higher over time, or is this idea really rooted in the philosophy of evolutionism and the Enlightenment assumption that the real Jesus was a moral teacher divinized by Paul and, later, by the bishops and councils of the early Church? It seems the earliest Christians had a very high Christology, as high as Nicea in terms of their judgments even if later Christians employed

¹⁰ Luz, accepting Markan priority and adopting Gérard Genette's terminology in *Palimpsestes: la littérature au second degré* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), understands the Gospel of Mark as a Matthean "hypotext," with the result that "it is possible to interpret the Gospel of Matthew as a hypertext engaged in a conscious dialogue with its hypotext" ("Intertexts in the Gospel of Matthew," *HTR* 97 [2004]: 125). But Luz provides an intriguing concession: "It is all the more astonishing, then, that Matthew does not make this dialogue explicit; the degrees of selectivity and dialogicity are low. The Gospel of Matthew never mentions its hypotext: it never thematizes or problematizes its relation to it. Remarkably, we find no explicit quotation of the all-determining hypotext... It cannot be proved that the Gospel of Matthew presupposes the knowledge of the Gospel of Mark by its implicit reader" (125–26). Luz attempts to explain this phenomenon and defend Markan priority in spite thereof, but in light of these observations might not it be best either to reconsider Markan priority (thinking in terms of more traditional source-critical concerns) or, bracketing historical-critical concerns, to conclude that the Model Reader (like Luz's "implicit reader") need not consider the Gospel of Mark at all?

different concepts.¹¹ Is it accurate to describe Markan Christology as “lower” than Matthean Christology, given that the Gospel of Mark presents Jesus himself as a divine epiphany in Mark 6:47–52,¹² or would it be better to recognize that neither is really “higher” or “lower” than the other but that Matthean Christology is somewhat static and explicit while Markan Christology is rather dynamic but implicit?

Redaction-critical comparison of parallel Matthean and Markan passages is of no help, for in each Gospel Christology is shaped by and perceived in the reading of the narrative. For instance, Markan commentators have observed again and again that the only human character who addresses Jesus as “Son of God” is the centurion at the crucifixion, and (whether his utterance is sardonic or not) the point is that the reader is supposed to understand Jesus as Son of God only in light of the cross. That being the case, it is thus of no significance that Matthew uses “Son of God” in certain loci where the respective Markan parallels do not. Or consider the case of Jesus’ words before the high priest (Mark 14:62 and Matt 26:64). The Markan Jesus’ response is decisive: he replies, “I am” (ἐγώ εἰμι) and thus confesses his identity as “the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One” with confidence and resolution. By contrast, the Matthean Jesus’ response is more enigmatic and ambivalent: he replies, “You have said so” (σὺ εἶπας), a response followed by Jesus’ words about the Son of Man which are introduced by the adversative πλὴν, suggesting that the Matthean Jesus’ response, while not a denial of his status as Son of God, is not a bold confession and embrace of his identity as such. Why would Matthew as empirical author, who elsewhere presents a most robust and royal picture of Jesus as Son of God, present Jesus as less resolute, confident and decisive than the portrayal he would have had before him in the Gospel of Mark? Answers given usually involve narrative concerns. Each evangelist seems to have had narrative reasons (or, perhaps better, since we are speaking of empirical authors, compositional reasons) for his particular presentation. The Markan Jesus’ confession is explicitly juxtaposed with Peter’s denial, the culmination of the narrative contrast between Jesus’

¹¹ On early Christology, see Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). On the distinction between judgments and concepts, see David S. Yeago, “The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis,” *ProEccl* 3 (1994): 152–64.

¹² See Hays, “Can the Gospels Teach Us How to Read the Old Testament?” *ProEccl* 11 (2002): 402–18.

fidelity and the disciples' multifold failures, while the Matthean Jesus may refrain from answering in a resolute and clear manner because (1) the Matthean Jesus himself forbade oaths in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:33–37) and the high priest has placed him under oath (ἐξορκίζω σε κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος, 26:63); (2) responding in this way matches his response before Pilate (27:11); and (3) this response emphasizes Caiaphas' responsibility in the affair, consistent with the Matthean theme of the opposition of Jewish groups and leadership to Jesus.¹³ All of these factors involve narrative, synchronic, compositional concerns, not redactional concerns. The upshot is that the Christology of any canonical Gospel cannot be understood apart from the narrative forms through which it is presented, and if that is so, then redaction criticism is of little help, being a tool unable to deal sufficiently with narrative dynamics.¹⁴

Thus, examining Christology with redaction-critical methods cannot help us determine whether the Gospel of Mark or the Gospel of Matthew was prior to the other. *Mutatis mutandis* the same judgment holds for other criteria regularly employed to adjudicate the question, such as the purported inviolable beauty of the Matthean structure or the coarse condition of Markan Greek. If we employ the narrative-oriented model of interpretation I am advocating here, however, then we can circumvent all these debates, because the synoptic problem is irrelevant for narrative criticism.

That said, if one does assume that the Gospel of Mark predates and was a source for the Gospel of Matthew, two considerations merit attention:

On the one hand, it may be suggested that the Gospel of Mark itself operates with an Isaac typology. Many of the allusions and echoes to be examined in the Gospel of Matthew exist in the Gospel of Mark as well,¹⁵ and, like the Matthean Jesus and the Isaac of Jewish tradition,

¹³ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 3:528–29.

¹⁴ Thus, purely redaction-critical attempts to answer the question of Markan vs. Matthean priority, such as Peter Head's monograph, *Christology and the Synoptic Problem: An Argument for Markan Priority* (SNTSMS 94; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), will always come to grief.

¹⁵ The Markan baptismal scene is a striking instance of this and is itself tied to Gen 22 and the Akedah in certain ways that the Matthean scene is not. See William R. Stegner, "The Baptism of Jesus and the Binding of Isaac," in *The Answers Lie Below: Essays in Honor of Lawrence Edmund Toombs* (ed. Henry O. Thompson; Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984), 331–47; and idem, "The Baptism of Jesus: A

the Markan Jesus is a beloved Son who goes willingly and obediently to his sacrificial death at the season of Passover at the hands of his Father for redemptive purposes. Thus, if the Model Reader perceives allusions to the Gospel of Mark, the Matthean Model Reader could also actualize a perceived Markan Isaac typology and thus find further confirmation that the Gospel of Matthew presents an Isaac typology.

On the other hand, perhaps the similarity of the Matthean and Markan Gospels would lead the Model Reader to narcotize Mark *in toto*, since the Model Reader could (1) suspect that in light of the excessive similarities (1) the Matthean Model Author is attempting to suppress a precursor text deficient in some way or other;¹⁶ and (2) suspect that paying inordinate attention to the Gospel of Mark would risk breaking the presumed coherence of the Gospel of Matthew in the process of reading; Model Readers assume coherence and economy.

Ultimately, however, the decision to bracket the Gospel of Mark is a pragmatic one: redaction-critical approaches simply miss much of what goes on in the Gospel of Matthew (and, ironically, presumably therefore the empirical author's mind, assuming a series of indexical relationships from Model Reader to Model Author to empirical author). A redaction-critical approach that in some way or other took seriously in practice the compositional, synchronic, narrative aspects of the Gospel of Matthew (as prominent Matthean scholars such as Stanton and Luz have advocated and attempted, with greater or lesser degrees of success in any given instance)¹⁷ and refrained from regarding the text the empirical Matthean author simply reproduces from Mark as insignificant, however, should come to conclusions very similar to mine.

Sixth, since I am approaching the Gospel of Matthew from a narrative perspective, some remarks regarding structure are in order. While many commentators believe the five great discourses are decisive for any conception of Matthean structure, I find it is most helpful to read the Gospel of Matthew in light of the narrative structure for which

Story Modeled on the Binding of Isaac," *BR* 1 (1985): 36–46, both of which concern the Markan version of the baptism.

¹⁶ In a recent essay, Richard Beaton examines the Matthean author's use of the Gospel of Mark and on the basis of the evangelist's focus on certain decisive themes concludes that he wrote not merely to expand his source but "to compose a new Gospel" ("How Matthew writes," in *The Written Gospel* [ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Donald A. Hagner; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 134).

¹⁷ See Stanton, "Redaction Criticism," 23–53; Luz, *Matthäus*, 39–46; and idem, *Theology*, 1–6.

Kingsbury has contended.¹⁸ As is well known, Kingsbury believes Matt 4:17 (“From that time on, Jesus began to proclaim, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near’”) and Matt 16:21 (“From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering...”) are major turning points, as ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς is common to both, and the content of what follows both coheres well with both, understood as programmatic statements. Frans Neirynck (among many others) has found this unpersuasive.¹⁹ Without launching into a full rebuttal of Neirynck’s article, a few brief observations are in order.

First, Neirynck’s approach is heavily redactional (or, perhaps better, compositional), an approach not necessarily helpful in perceiving and evaluating narrative signals.

Second, in accord with the redactional approach, he considers the empirical Matthew’s supposed insertion of ἀπὸ τότε at Matt 26:16// Mark 14:11 highly significant. Mark 14:11b reads, καὶ ἐξήτει πῶς αὐτὸν εὐκαίρως παραδοῖ, while Matt 26:16 reads, καὶ ἀπὸ τότε ἐξήτει εὐκαιρίαν ἵνα αὐτὸν παραδῶ. He then considers ἐξήτει to have been the equivalent of ἤρξατο in the empirical Matthew’s mind. Neirynck writes, “Matthew has inserted ἀπὸ τότε into the text of Mark: καὶ ἐξήτει. This imperfect ἐξήτει is correctly rendered in the NEB version: ‘and he *began* to look for...’ Matthew’s ἀπὸ τότε phrase adds emphasis to this ‘beginning’.”²⁰

This is not finally compelling. Neirynck seems to want to suggest that Kingsbury has not gone far enough, that Matt 26:16 should be considered a third major turning point in the Gospel: “The beginning of Jesus’ ministry after John was arrested, Peter’s confession and the first passion prediction, the plot to kill Jesus and the treachery of Judas are three major events in the Gospel of Matthew... More than in Mk, Matthew’s phrase in 4,17; 16,21; 26,16 emphasizes the beginning of a new phase in the Gospel story.”²¹ Thus, Kingsbury’s fundamental the-

¹⁸ See Kingsbury, “The Developing Conflict between Jesus and the Jewish Leaders in Matthew’s Gospel: A Literary-Critical Study,” *CBQ* 49 (1987): 64–65; idem, *Matthew as Story*, 40–42; and David R. Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew’s Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (JSNTSup 31/Bible and Literature Series 15; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989; repr., Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

¹⁹ Frans Neirynck, “απο τότε ηρξατο and the Structure of Matthew,” *ETL* 64 (1988): 21–59.

²⁰ Ibid., 33–34. Emphasis original.

²¹ Ibid., 57–58.

sis would not be confuted but rather confirmed. Nevertheless, it must again be pointed out that from a narrative perspective (as well as a thoroughgoing author-centered, compositional perspective) the precise formulation employed at 4:17 and 16:21 (ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς...) is unique and sufficiently substantive to be considered significant. Had Matthew as empirical author wished, he could easily have used the phrase at 26:16 or elsewhere. Perhaps the empirical Matthew avoided using the phrase at 26:16 for a reason, namely to prevent Judas from being a protagonist who drives the action. Jesus is the decisive subject in 4:17 and 16:21, and he predicts his death in 26:1–5. As will be shown when we discuss the Passion Narrative in chapter 10, the Matthean Jesus controls all events, even orchestrating affairs to secure his own demise. It would not be fitting for Judas to be the subject of the phrase, and, in any case, in the text as we have it, the phrase is not found in Matt 26:16. Neiryneck seems not to take account of the significance of ὁ Ἰησοῦς as a decisive component of the phrase.

Third, Neiryneck is concerned that granting the phrases such weight introduces incoherence into the passages in which they are found. Quoting an earlier note of his, Neiryneck writes, “Je reste convaincu que la division à 4,17 et 16,21 repose sur une mauvaise interprétation de la formule ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο (cf. 26,16 ἀπὸ τότε): on ne peut la séparer de la péricope précédente à laquelle elle donne un caractère de “pericope d’ouverture” (4,12–16.17; 16,13–20.21–23)’. Such a criticism, I think, is still valid.”²² That is, if the phrase in each instance seems to point forward in a programmatic way, it appears to disturb the coherence of the passages within which the phrase appears. This objection may be overcome if one sees the event following the phrase in each instance as a programmatic illustration of the substance of what follows enacted by the disciples. In Matt 4:18–22, the response of the four disciples is paradigmatic of how one should respond to Jesus’ programmatic proclamation given in 4:17, while in Matt 16:22–23, Peter’s rebuke of Jesus prefigures the misunderstanding and rejection which Jesus will face in the coming chapters. In each instance, then, the formula both functions within its immediate co-text and also serves to introduce the content of the coming major division.

In short, I would contend that Kingsbury’s case is finally compelling, especially if one approaches the Gospel of Matthew from a narrative

²² Ibid., 24.

perspective; the formula in Matt 4:17 and 16:21 is peculiar and portends the substance of what comes next in the story. The discourses are not insignificant, but can be fit into this narrative framework, as Bauer has shown.²³

Finally, a summary of the theory of the Model Reader is in order, as we are about to embark on an exegetical journey through the Gospel of Matthew. I maintain that the Akedah functions as an intertextual frame from the early Jewish encyclopedia,²⁴ aspects of which the Model Reader must actualize or narcotize as prompted by the Matthean text and knowledge achieved and accumulated in the reading of prior Matthean material.²⁵ When the Model Reader perceives what might be an allusion to Isaac material on the level of the linear manifestation of the text, the Model Reader makes an inferential walk into the encyclopedia in which frames are contained, and, on the basis of the principles of coherence and economy and the nature of the co-text (Eco's term for immediate narrative context) and local topic (van Dijk's term for the "aboutness" of that immediate narrative context), asks which, if any, of the aspects of

²³ See Bauer, *Structure*, 129–34. Bauer makes six observations in the course of claiming that what scholars think of as the five great Matthean discourses are woven tightly into the warp and woof of the story: (1) the formulae at the end of the discourses function to connect each discourse with what follows (a point made by B. H. Streeter in *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* [4th ed.; London: Macmillan, 1930], 262); (2) the discourses have no clear beginnings and thus "are also integrated into the material that precedes" (129); (3) the content of the discourses reflect their broader contexts; (4) "there is no alternation between narrative and discourse material in Matthew" since one finds narrative within the discourses and vice-versa (131); (5) the five discourses need not point to a Pentateuchal structure making Jesus a "new Moses" but rather reflect "Matthew's general tendency to group like material...and...the tendency within Judaism to group material into units of five (five books of Moses, five books of Psalms, five divisions in the *Megilloth* and the *Pirke Aboth*)" (131–32); (6) Matthew nevertheless draws attention to them by means of the closing transitional statements (e.g., 26:1). With regards to function, Bauer concludes, "Matthew places these discourses within the narrative, or better stated, he includes them as part of the story, in order to contribute to his picture of the role of Jesus as one who is present with his community, instructing and commanding not only the twelve during his earthly ministry, but also the post-Easter church (28.18–20)... In terms of literary structure, therefore, the discourses function to underscore the climax of 28:16–20" (132–33).

²⁴ With regard to one passage (Matt 1:18–25), the birth of Isaac also functions as an intertextual frame, as we shall soon see.

²⁵ One may also presume that the Model Reader should be familiar with the text at hand, as the very end of the Gospel itself invites the Model Reader to reread the Gospel with attention to that which Jesus has taught ("...teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you" [Matt 28:20]). See Allison, "Foreshadowing the Passion"; Moberly, *Bible, Theology, and Faith*, 189–91; Luz, *Theology*, 5–6; and idem, "Matthean Christology," 83.

the relevant frame should be actualized or narcotized, thus confirming the presence of the allusion through a hermeneutical spiral.

6.2 MATT 1:1: "SON OF ABRAHAM"

The very first verse of the Gospel of Matthew, Βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ, raises significant interpretive questions regarding its function and range. Is this first verse a title? If so, for what? What is its range—does it cover the entire Gospel, or only a limited preliminary section? The answers involve the import of and relationship between the phrases "son of David" and "son of Abraham." The former plays a major role in the Gospel of Matthew and thus appears to function as some sort of Christological title throughout the entire Gospel, but what of the latter?

In his recent collection of essays on the Gospel of Matthew, Allison lists six general approaches to the range and import of this verse.²⁶ First, since in Gen 5:1 βίβλος γενέσεως heads up a genealogy of Adam's descendants, the phrase may cover only the Matthean genealogy itself.²⁷ Second, since γένεσις in Matt 1:18 does not mean "genealogy," some reject the strict limits of the first option and hold that it introduces the first chapter as a whole. Third, Matt 1:1 may introduce the entire infancy narrative, that is, the first two chapters of the Gospel. Fourth, a few scholars approaching the matter from a literary perspective contend that Matt 1:1 covers the first major section, 1:1–4:16.²⁸ Fifth, many ancient and modern commentators hold that Matt 1:1 introduces the entire Gospel.²⁹ Sixth, a small number of scholars maintain that the five prior options are complementary.³⁰ In general, it appears the more a commentator takes interest in the narrative, synchronic dimensions

²⁶ Allison, "Matthew's First Two Words (Matt. 1:1)," in *Studies in Matthew*, 158–60.

²⁷ Moisés Mayordomo-Marín, however, rightly observes that in Gen 5:1 (as well as 2:4) βίβλος γενέσεως is preceded by Αὕτη ἡ, something altogether lacking in Matt 1:1 (*Den Anfang hören: Leserorientierte Evangelienexegese am Beispiel von Matthäus 1–2*; FRLANT 180; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 210–11.

²⁸ Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), esp. 7–17.

²⁹ Among the moderns, see Luz, *Matthäus*, 1:117–19; among the ancients, see Jerome, *Comm. Matt.* 1.1 and Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 2.3.

³⁰ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 1:149–60.

of the Gospel of Matthew, the further a commentator understands the range of Matt 1:1.³¹

The significance of “son of David” in the Gospel of Matthew provides leverage on the question of the significance of “son of Abraham” and thus the range of Matt 1:1. Since the former phrase is so significant throughout the Gospel, symmetry suggests the latter may be as well. Stanton writes, “Narrative critics have reminded us of the crucial importance of the openings of writings. The Gospel of Matthew is no exception. ‘Son of David’ is the very first Christological title used by the evangelist in his opening line which functions as a heading (1. 1).”³² Although Stanton does not believe Matt 1:1 covers the entire Gospel,³³ he stands with the vast consensus of Matthean commentators in believing “son of David,” whatever its precise import, to be an important Matthean Christological category which permeates the entirety of the Gospel.³⁴

³¹ Such as in the cases of Kingsbury, Allison (who, although a traditional critical scholar, is of late attempting to pay significant attention to narrative factors) and Luz (who has displayed an increasing interest in the Gospel’s narrative dynamics and the role of readers).

³² Stanton, “Christology and the Parting of the Ways,” in *Gospel*, 181. See also Dennis E. Smith, ed., “How Gospels Begin,” *Semeia* 52 (1990): i–viii, and Morna Hooker, *Beginnings: Keys That Uncover the Gospels* (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1997).

³³ Stanton, introduction to *Gospel*, 12–13. Stanton suggests the Gospel of Matthew was understood as a “Gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον) in terms of genre from the outset, and thus the idea that Matt 1:1 contains the title of the work must be discounted.

³⁴ Stanton believes the phrase involves not only healing but also opposition from the Jewish leadership (“Christology and the Parting of the Ways,” 180–91). On the significance and import of “son of David” in the Gospel of Matthew, see Wayne Baxter, “Healing and the ‘Son of David’: Matthew’s Warrant,” *NovT* 48 (2006): 36–50; Christoph Burger, *Jesus als Davidsohn. Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970); Dennis C. Duling, “The Therapeutic Son of David: An Element in Matthew’s Christological Apologetic,” *NTS* 24 (1978): 392–409; J. M. Gibbs, “Purpose and Pattern in Matthew’s Use of the Title ‘Son of David,’” *NTS* 10 (1963–1964): 446–64; Harrington, “‘Jesus, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham...’; Christology and Second Temple Judaism,” *ITQ* 57 (1991): 185–95; Carl Kelly, “The Messiah: Whose Son Is He? Another Look at the Son of David and Son of God Titles in Matthew,” *Trinity Seminary Review* 26 (2005): 17–28; Kingsbury, “The Title ‘Son of David’ in Matthew’s Gospel,” *JBL* 95 (1976): 591–602; Yigal Levin, “Jesus, ‘Son of God’ and ‘Son of David’: The ‘Adoption’ of Jesus into the Davidic Line,” *JNT* 28 (2006): 415–42; Luz, “Matthean Christology,” 85–88; Lidija Novakovic, *Messiah, The Healer of the Sick* (WUNT 2/170; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); and Kim Paffenroth, “Jesus as Anointed and Healing Son of David in the Gospel of Matthew,” *Bib* 80 (1999): 547–54.

Since “son of David” is so significant, parallelism strongly suggests that “son of Abraham” plays a similarly significant role throughout the Gospel.³⁵ Luz writes:

The fact that [Jesus Christ] is referred to as the “Son of David” may have been obvious to Christian readers. After all, it was widely believed that Jesus was descended from a Davidic family (see Romans 1:3). But why should he be called “Son of Abraham”? The expression stands out because it is not an established title. Nor does it kindle associations with the Messiah: every Jew is a son of Abraham. Why is it given special emphasis here? The genealogy that follows, a genealogy beginning with Abraham, answers the question only in a formal sense. What we have here is a blank slate deliberately inserted by Matthew, to be filled in by his readers in quite different ways. His concern is that they take along in their reading an unanswered question. Not until later will they be able to say in what sense Matthew spoke of Jesus as “the Son of Abraham.”³⁶

Luz’s observations raise two important issues. First, “son of David” and “son of Abraham” seem asymmetrical at first glance; if “son of David” is so significant in the Gospel, might not “son of Abraham” be as well? Second, filling in the blank slate of “son of Abraham” requires further reading in the Gospel (as does “son of David”).

At this point, the reader of the Gospel wonders what may be involved with calling Jesus Christ the “son of Abraham.” Luz suggests at various points in his works that Jesus is like Abraham in his obedience.³⁷ Among other potentially fruitful and complementary possibilities, however, the Model Reader may hazard perceiving here a possible reference to Isaac. The phrase “son of Abraham” calls forth a multitude of potentially relevant materials from the Jewish cultural encyclopedia, including texts and traditions pertaining to Isaac, and that which the Model Reader is to actualize from the encyclopedia and that which is to be left narcotized can only be determined on the basis of further reading.

Reading further reveals that “son of David” and “son of Abraham” may stand in symmetry in the entire Gospel. Stanley Hauerwas, reading

³⁵ Even if Matt 1:1 does not head up the entire Gospel, the genealogy nevertheless culminates in Christ, who is the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham. See K.-H. Ostmeyer, “Der Stammbaum des Verheißenen: Theologische Implikationen der Namen und Zahlen in Mt 1.1–17,” *NTS* 46 (2000): 175–92; and Detlev Dormeyer, “Mt 1,1 als Überschrift zur Gattung und Christologie des Matthäus-Evangeliums,” in *The Four Gospels 1992* (ed. Frans van Segbroeck et al.; 3 vols.; BETL; Louvain: Peeters, 1992), 1361–83 (here: 1364–65).

³⁶ Luz, *Theology*, 24.

³⁷ As does Moberly, *Bible, Theology, and Faith*.

the Gospel of Matthew with the fresh eyes of a theologian not heavy with the long traditions of Gospel scholarship, finds a complementary function:

It is interesting to ask why Matthew names Jesus as the son of David prior to being the son of Abraham. The answer may be simply that Matthew thinks naming Abraham second provides a useful transition to the list of descendants beginning with Isaac. Yet no words or ordering of words in scripture is without significance. Matthew knows he is telling the story of one that was born a king, yet a king to be sacrificed. God had tested Abraham by commanding him to sacrifice Isaac. By beginning with "Son of David" Matthew prepares us to recognize that this is a king who will end up on the cross.³⁸

"Son of David" and "son of Abraham" may therefore stand at the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew as two titular designations specifying two Christological categories of the greatest import: Christ ("son of David"), and Isaac ("son of Abraham"), with this latter possibly involving "Son of God" language in the Gospel of Matthew: as Isaac was the son of Abraham his father, so Jesus is the Son of God his Father. This second Christological category would solve the somewhat absurd and embarrassing conundrum of a dying Messiah, as the Messiah never undergoes martyrdom in any of the various portrayals in early Jewish traditions relevant for interpreting the Gospel of Matthew.³⁹ In Matthew, the categories of Jesus as both Messiah and also crucified savior are respectively undergirded by "son of David" language and the Isaac typology, the latter providing the conceptual category of the atoning death of a martyr.⁴⁰

³⁸ Stanley Hauerwas, *Matthew* (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible; Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006), 17.

³⁹ Luz writes, "Matthew narrates the meaning of the title 'son of David' in his story. Jesus is Israel's expected Messiah, but for many in Israel he does not act among his people as expected. After all, Israel's Messiah is to be the Lord of all the world" ("Matthean Christology," 85).

⁴⁰ Rudolf Pesch also suggests that an Isaac typology is to be heard in Matt 1:1, but he understands Isaac himself to be a Messianic figure: "Since in the title at the beginning of the genealogy (Mt 1.1) Jesus is deliberately called 'son of Abraham', he is not only being introduced as a 'Jew'. In the early Jewish-Christian understanding (as in the understanding of the early Gentile Christians who were educated, prepared and trained in the synagogue), one can assume that an association with an Isaac typology would be made... As the 'son of Abraham', Messiah Jesus resembles Isaac. Isaac, as the son who was born by virtue of the promise or [*sic*; "of" is meant] the Spirit, has become a messianic representative" ("He Will Be Called A Nazorean": Messianic Exegesis in Matthew 1-2," in *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel* (ed. Craig A. Evans and William R. Stegner; JSNTSup 104/Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity 3; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 139-40).

Needless to say, the idea of a crucified Messiah was something of a scandal in early Christianity (cf. 1 Cor 1:18–25). Stanton asserts that the general Matthean approach to resolving the paradox is similar to the approach of other early Christian writers: the Gospel of Matthew employs a two-Parousias schema to explain how the Messiah can both suffer and die and yet be triumphant. The first coming involves his suffering and death, whereas the second coming will involve the ultimate establishment of his reign.⁴¹ This is a diachronic approach. An Isaac typology, however, would serve as a positive synchronic complement: in his first coming, Jesus was not only the Davidic Messiah but also the antitype of Isaac, the paradigm of the sacrificial victim and martyr. Jon Levenson observes:

Within the overall structures of the Gospels...the two vocabularies of sonship, that of the beloved son and that of the Davidic king as the son of God, reinforce each other powerfully. They yield a story in which the rejection, suffering, and death of the putatively Davidic figure is made to confirm rather than contradict [Jesus'] status as God's only begotten Son.⁴²

Again, finding the beginnings of this potential Isaac typology in Matt 1:1 requires further reading. The Model Reader finds further hints that the figure of Isaac is in play in the next two major sections of the first chapter of the Gospel.

6.3 MATT 1:2–17: THE MATTHEAN GENEALOGY

Reading further immediately brings the Model Reader to the genealogy of Matt 1:2–17. While many suggestions pertaining to its function involve analysis of the significance of the inclusion of women and Gentiles, scholars have achieved little consensus in making sense of the phenomenon of the number 14.⁴³ Davies and Allison opt for gematria: “Matthew’s genealogy has 3×14 generations because David’s name has three consonants whose sum is 14.”⁴⁴ There is, however, another complementary possibility: whatever else its function, the chronology of the genealogy may point to the Akedah and thus to Isaac. Roy Rosenberg explains:

⁴¹ Stanton, “Christology and the Parting of the Ways,” 185–91.

⁴² Levenson, *Death and Resurrection*, 206.

⁴³ For an overview of approaches, see Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 1:161–65.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:163.

Jesus is alleged by Matthew to have lived and died during the first jubilee of the fourth cycle of fourteen generations following Abraham: i.e., at the beginning of the forty-second generation following Abraham. Following this system of chronology, the sacrifice of Jesus becomes exactly parallel to the offering of Isaac, for the book of Jubilees (13:16, 17:15, 19:1) indicates that the offering of Isaac had taken place just prior to the beginning of the forty-second jubilee after the creation of the world.⁴⁵

Perhaps, then, the reader is to understand that the Matthean genealogy has 3×14 generations both because the consonants of David's name total fourteen (Davies's and Allison's suggestion) and also because forty-two (3×14) jubilees of years points to Isaac (Rosenberg's suggestion). If so, this would (1) explain both the number fourteen and the three-fold division of the genealogy and (2) reveal more clearly the symmetry between "son of David" and "son of Abraham" in Matt 1:1.

6.4 MATT 1:18–25: THE EXTRAORDINARY CONCEPTIONS OF TWO PROMISED CHILDREN

A third potential echo of Isaac would greatly increase the Model Reader's confidence that vague echoes of Isaac are present in Matt 1:1 and 1:2–17, and that is precisely what the Model Reader finds in the very next section, the angel's announcement to Joseph in 1:18–25, which presents an unmistakable allusion to Isaac. Thus, the first three definable units of the Gospel which the first chapter comprises would each evoke the figure of Isaac.

The angel's words to Joseph in Matt 1:20–21 present a possible allusion to Gen 17:19, which contains the first mention of Isaac in the Old Testament:⁴⁶

Matt 1:20–21: ἰδοὺ ἄγγελος κυρίου κατ' ὄναρ ἐφάνη αὐτῷ λέγων· Ἰωσήφ υἱὸς Δαβίδ, μὴ φοβηθῆς παραλαβεῖν Μαρίαν τὴν γυναικὰ σου· τὸ γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ γεννηθὲν ἐκ πνεύματος ἑστίν ἅγιον. τέξεται δὲ υἱόν, καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν

Gen 17:19 LXX: εἶπεν δὲ ὁ θεὸς τῷ Ἀβραάμ ναὶ ἰδοὺ Σαρρα ἡ γυνὴ σου τέξεται σοι υἱόν καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰσαακ

⁴⁵ Roy Rosenberg, "Jesus, Isaac, and the Suffering Servant," *JBL* 84 (1965): 387.

⁴⁶ Single underlining indicates precise verbal, syntactical parallelism, while double underlining indicates parallels of personages.

The degree of syntactical correspondence is significant, especially the phrases pertaining to Sarah and Mary bearing sons and the formula concerning their naming. Even more intriguing and suggestive are the thematic parallels between the persons of the angel, Joseph, Mary and Jesus on the one hand and God, Abraham, Sarah and Isaac on the other. In each story, a divine figure (the angel or God) makes the announcement to the father (Joseph or Abraham), both of whom are associated with righteousness in Scripture (Joseph is described as δίκαιος in the immediate narrative context in Matt 1:19, while Abraham is associated with δικαιοσύνη in Gen 15:6, 18:19, and 24:27 LXX). Both the Virgin Mary and barren Sarah stand outside the natural boundaries of child-bearing status. Finally, both Jesus and Isaac are promised children on whom depend the promises and purposes of God.⁴⁷

It appears the Gospel of Matthew is inviting the Model Reader to see the situations of Sarah and Mary in light of each other and to draw an apologetic moral: If the conception of Isaac by a barren woman was possible, so too the conception of Jesus by a Virgin. In fact, the formula quotation of Isa 7:14 LXX in Matt 1:22–23, occurring in the immediate narrative context of 1:20–21 and having as its topic virginal conception (ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν καὶ καλέσει τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἑμμανουήλ), makes the apologetic concern of the narrative co-text explicit. The Gospel of Matthew here thus presents the reader with two complementary rhetorical devices encouraging belief in Mary's virginal conception of Jesus, an overt quotation and a more covert allusion. Mary's divine conception of Jesus was not only prophesied by Scripture (the quotation of Isa 7:14 LXX) but indeed had precedent in Israel's sacred matriarchal history (the allusion to Gen 17:19 LXX).

⁴⁷ No Matthean commentator has fully explored the typological possibilities presented here, even though the NA²⁷ lists Gen 17:19 LXX in the margin as an allusive possibility for this passage (probably with reference only to Matt 1:21). Luz, author of the leading German commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, simply does not mention the possibility when discussing this passage (*Matthäus*, 1:146–49). Neither does Maarten J. J. Menken in his recent treatment of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Matthew, *Matthew's Bible* (BETL; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004). Davies and Allison (*Saint Matthew*, 1:208–10) treat Matt 1:21 as a discrete unit apart from 1:20, as does Pesch, in spite of his tantalizing suggestions regarding Isaac ("He Will Be Called A Nazorean," 153), and thus they miss the significant parallelism with Gen 17:19 LXX seen when the two verses are considered together, as we shall soon see. Richard J. Erickson observes the full extent of the allusion in "Joseph and the Birth of Isaac in Matthew 1," *BBR* 10 (2000): 48.

The Gospel of Matthew is inviting the Model Reader to make the same interpretive moves made by certain patristic writers who saw the Virgin Mary prefigured in Sarah, thus making the Gospel itself the first witness to an early Christian typological tradition, and we have here another instance in which the New Testament stands in continuity with patristic traditions of interpretation.

The patristic Sarah-Mary typology is exemplified most succinctly by Ambrose, who links Sarah and Mary for apologetic purposes in claiming that the birth of Jesus was prefigured in Isaac: "An aged woman who was sterile brought him to birth according to God's promise, so that we might believe that God has power to bring it about that even a virgin may give birth."⁴⁸ The type of barren Sarah demonstrates that the Virgin Birth was not entirely without parallel in sacred history.

Chrysostom provides a lengthier treatment and, like Ambrose, emphasizes the probative, apologetic and edifying functions of the typology. In his forty-ninth homily on Genesis,⁴⁹ Chrysostom explains why the matriarchs Rebecca, Sarah and Rachel were barren, asserting that "these things are told for our benefit," pointing forward to the situation of the Virgin Mary:

What, then, is the reason? So that when you see the Virgin giving birth to our common Lord you may not be incredulous. Exercise your mind, it [i.e., the biblical text] is saying, on the womb of these sterile women so that when you see an infertile and sealed womb opened for childbearing by God's grace, you may not be surprised to hear that a maiden gave birth. Or rather, feel surprise and amazement, but don't refuse faith in the marvel. So when the Jew says, How did the Virgin give birth? say to him, How did the sterile old woman give birth? In that case, you see, there were two impediments, her advanced age and the imperfect condition of nature, whereas with the Virgin there was one impediment, her not having experienced marriage. Consequently, the barren woman prepares the way for the Virgin.⁵⁰

Chrysostom further maintains that Gabriel made a similar argument to Mary, who, having heard Gabriel's startling annunciation that she will conceive the one who is the Davidic Messiah and Son of the Most High, asks, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" (Luke 1:34). Gabriel

⁴⁸ *Isaac* 1.1 (= PL 14.527; trans. M. P. McHugh, *Saint Ambrose: Seven Exegetical Works* [FC 65; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1972], 10–65).

⁴⁹ The same material is found in *Pecc.* 6–8 (= PG 51.359–60).

⁵⁰ *Hom. Gen.* 49.6–7 (= PG 54.445–46; trans. Hill in *Saint John Chrysostom: Homilies on Genesis* 46–67, 42–49).

employs the example of Mary's barren kinswoman Elizabeth to illustrate to Mary the very possibility of his striking claim. Chrysostom writes:

For your part, dearly beloved, consider, I ask you, how the barren woman led her [i.e., Mary] to faith in the birth. You see, since the first demonstration was beyond the maiden's imagining, listen to how he [i.e., Gabriel] brought his words down to a lower level and gave her guidance through visible realities. "Behold," he said, "your kinswoman Elizabeth has herself conceived a son in her old age, and this is actually the sixth month for her, despite her being called barren" [Luke 1:36]. It is solely for the Virgin's sake that he made mention of the barren woman; otherwise, why did he mention her kinswoman's birth to her and why say "despite her being called barren"?⁵¹

Just as Gabriel used the example of barren Elizabeth to show Mary that her virginal conception of a child was not without precedent, Chrysostom himself employs barren matriarchs to demonstrate the same to his contemporaries. Both Gabriel's and Chrysostom's rhetoric thus employs the principle of *nihil sub sole novum*.

A Greek homily once attributed to Ephrem the Syrian, the "Sermo in Abraham et Isaac," also observes parallels between the situations of Sarah and Mary (albeit without any overt apologetic purpose).⁵² The homilist deemed Ephrem Graecus notes that both Sarah's and Abraham's bodies were "bowed under nature's law now that their youth had wasted away" (strophe 7). But "the hope in God which flourished" in both Abraham and Sarah "was not only unageing but invincible" (strophe 8). Ephrem Graecus next draws a brief parallel between Isaac and Christ: "Therefore beyond hope she gave birth to Isaac who bore in every way the type of the Master" (strophe 9). Strophes 10–14 then extend the typology to Sarah and Mary:

It was not nature's work / that a dead womb conceived
and breasts that were dry / gave Isaac milk.
It was not nature's work / that the Virgin Mary

⁵¹ *Hom. Gen.* 49.10–11 (= PG 54.446, trans. Hill).

⁵² The date of the sermon is obscure; the text incorporates parts of Gregory of Nyssa's *On the Nature of the Son* (= PG 46.565–576) and was once ascribed to Chrysostom. It was first published in modern times in 1915 under the title *Sermo in Abraham et Isaac* in *S. Ephraem Syri Opera*, 43–83. For the most complete secondary source dealing with this sermon, see Ansgar Wucherpfennig, "Abraham hat gewünscht, meinen Tag zu sehen" (Joh 8,56). *Das Opfer Abrahams und die Geburt Christi in einer Predigt Ephräms des Syrers* (Koinonia Oriens 109; Cologne: Koinonia Oriens, 2004). The translation here employed is from Archimandrite Ephrem, <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/ephrem/AbrIsaac.htm>.

conceived without a man / and without corruption gave birth.
 He made Sara / a mother in old age;
 revealed Mary / a virgin after child-birth.
 An Angel in the tent / said to the patriarch,
 "At this time / Sara will have a son." [Gen 18:10, 14]
 An Angel in Nazareth / said to Mary,
 "Behold, you will bear a son / O highly favoured." [Luke 1:31, 28]

Ephrem Graecus thus equates the situations of the Virgin Mary and barren Sarah: both women conceived under divine power contrary to the course of nature.

While none of the foregoing Fathers' observations explicitly concern the Gospel of Matthew, the latter two in fact having quoted from the Gospel of Luke, they would not think their insights invalid if applied specifically to the Gospel of Matthew since they viewed Scripture as a coherent whole and would not have thought in terms of two discrete birth narratives. The one patristic witness to the Sarah-Mary typology directly commenting on the Gospel of Matthew, the *Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum*, illustrates this well. Its comparison of Sarah and Mary and Isaac and Jesus is made in the course of commenting on the genealogy, not the precise passage with which we are herein concerned, Matt 1:18–25, and in presenting the same parallels as Ambrose, Chrysostom and Ephrem Graecus, the anonymous writer cites Luke 2:10 as well as Gal 4:4:

For in this way Isaac was bestowed to parents who had long given up hope as a joy in their extreme old age. Isaac was not understood as a son of nature but as a son of grace. In this way Isaac was born by a Judean mother at the very end of her life as a joy for all to behold. In this same way the angel spoke to the shepherds: "Lo, I announce to you a great joy which will be for all people" [Luke 2:10]. And in this same way the apostle said, "When the time came, God sent his Son born of a woman, born under law" [Gal 4:4]. Although God's Son was born from a virgin and Isaac from an old woman, both were born wholly beyond the expectations of nature. The former had delayed until after his mother was able to give birth; the latter would arrive before his mother was able to give birth. The former was born from an old woman who was already failing to some extent; the latter was born from a chaste virgin.⁵³

⁵³ PG 56.613 (trans. Manlio Simonetti, *Matthew 1–13* [ACCS Ia; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001], 5). The work likely dates from the early fifth century and was once wrongly attributed to Chrysostom.

One finds, then, a relatively consistent line of typological interpretation of Sarah and Mary: they resemble each other in that both conceived children, in the words of the *Opus*, “wholly beyond the expectations of nature.” Further, the comparison is the fruit of the perception of broader thematic, theological correspondence, not syntactical observations. Finally, the typology serves a powerful apologetic purpose that Ambrose and Chrysostom exploit explicitly.

These patristic observations should encourage us to ask whether the Model Reader would perceive similar parallels with similar functions in Matt 1:18–25. Modern commentators find no extensive and specific allusion to Gen 17:19 LXX here, seeing only an appropriation of generic birth announcement formula found throughout the Old Testament involving the pattern *τίκτω-καλέω-ὄνομα*. With regard to Matt 1:21, Davies and Allison assert, “This prophecy of future greatness, which may be compared with those concerning Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Augustus, and many other religious heroes, exhibits a form common to birth annunciation narratives,” and then list several biblical examples from the LXX, including Gen 16:11 (concerning Ishmael), Gen 17:19, Isa 7:14, Luke 1:13, and Luke 1:31. To this list one could add the similar, past-tense, after-the-fact formulations of Gen 19:37, Gen 19:38, Gen 21:3 (here with reference to Isaac), Gen 29:32–35, Gen 30:20–21, Gen 38:3–5, as well as several other instances in the LXX, all of which involve the formula *τίκτω-καλέω-ὄνομα*. Pesch suspects an Isaac typology is indeed present in this passage⁵⁴ but nevertheless also sees a generic, not a particular, allusion here.⁵⁵ In light of the commonality of the phrasing

⁵⁴ Pesch writes, “The Isaac typology can also be found in the birth announcement in Mt. 1.18–25 since the miraculous birth of the messiah is prefigured in Isaac’s miraculous birth” (“‘He Will Be Called A Nazorean,’” 140); “Indeed, the genre of the birth announcements used in Mt. 1.18–25 leads us back to Abraham, Sarah and Isaac,” even though Pesch regards it as a generic formula here, not a reference to Gen 17:19 LXX in particular (*ibid.*, 156).

⁵⁵ Pesch writes, “Both the birth announcement formula in Isa. 7.14 and the ‘God gives a son’ formula in Isa. 9.5 point ultimately to the Old Testament and the early Jewish genre of ‘birth announcements’.” This is widely witnessed to outside of the Abraham-Isaac tradition, and is used in the formation of the narrative concerning Jesus’ birth announcement in Mt. 1.18–25 (as it is with regard to John the Baptist and Jesus in Lk 1) (*ibid.*, 161). Pesch refers then to Gen 16, 17, 18, 21, Judg 13, 1 Sam 1, Isa 7:10–15, *Ant.* 2.9.2–4, and *L.A.B.* 9. He continues: “Genres are characterized by ‘formulas’, by set literal expressions. In Mt. 1.18–25 we meet a number of formulas typical of the genre of ‘birth announcements’ . . . All contacts of the reflexive citation of Isa 7.14 in Mt 1.23 with the remaining verses in Mt. 1.18–25 are at the same time contacts with the formula language of the ‘birth announcement’ genre” (*ibid.*). Even though he suspects

and the fact that the Gospel of Matthew immediately cites Isa 7:14 in Matt 1:22–23 using such phrasing (ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἑμμανουήλ), should not the Model Reader here leave any particular and exclusive allusion to Gen 17:19 LXX and reference to Isaac narcotized, and understand this merely as a generic “prophecy of future greatness”?

On the contrary, the Model Reader notes that the degree of syntactical repetition is high and in a manner unique to Matt 1:20–21 and Gen 17:19 LXX. While many verses contain the τίκτω-καλέω-ὄνομα formula, either as predictions (i.e., Gen 16:11 LXX, God’s announcement of Ishmael to Hagar) or as after-the-fact statements (i.e., Gen 29:32: καὶ συνέλαβεν Λεια καὶ ἔτεκεν υἱόν τῷ Ιακωβ ἐκάλεσεν δὲ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ρουβὴν) very few make reference to a γυνή as well. Davies and Allison, for their part, do not discuss the potential allusion to Sarah as Abraham’s wife in Matt 1:20, confining their discussion to 1:21.⁵⁶ If it is included, however, one finds an increased degree of syntactical similarity: Σαρρα ἡ γυνή σου τέξεται σοι υἱόν καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ισαακ (Gen 17:19);...Μαρίαν τὴν γυναικά σου...τέξεται δὲ υἱόν, καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν (Matt 1:20–21).⁵⁷

Furthermore, unlike most other occurrences of the τίκτω-καλέω-ὄνομα formula, in this instance it is God in particular who makes the announcement in the former case and God’s agent, the “angel of the Lord,” in the latter. Moreover, Joseph is described as “righteous” (δίκαιος) in Matt 1:19; Abraham is associated with “righteousness” (δικαιοσύνη) in Gen 15:6, 18:19 and 24:27.⁵⁸ The decisive commonality

and suggests that Isaac is playing a typological role in Matt 1, his failure to consider vv. 20 and 21 together as a unit lead him, I suspect, to miss the decisive and striking nature of the particular allusion to Gen 17:19 LXX (see fn. 56 below).

⁵⁶ The versification of the Bible, the common critical focus on discrete words and phrases in the Gospels, the commentary format and the default searching parameters of many modern Bible software programs affect the search for syntactical parallelism between New Testament and Old Testament texts; often only one verse is compared with another, instead of one passage with another. (*Mutatis mutandis* the same problem plagues intracanonical allusions within either Testament as such as well.) Thus, Davies and Allison here miss the importance of Matt 1:20, which contains the word γυνή. This problem will present itself again in our discussion of Matt 3:17, in regards to which scholars miss allusions to Gen 22:11 and 15 by focusing exclusively on Gen 22:12 and 16.

⁵⁷ Other passages which find reference to a wife and the formula are Judg 13:24, 2 Sam 12:24, 1 Chr 7:16 and 1 Chr 7:23, which appear to have no relevance for the present discussion.

⁵⁸ See also 1 Macc 2:52, which makes reference to Gen 15:6.

establishing a likely link between Sarah and Mary (and thus Isaac and Jesus), however, is the conspicuous supernatural element operative in the promised children's respective conceptions, an element lacking in other Old Testament appearances of the pattern.⁵⁹ The formula quotation of Isa 7:14 in Matt 1:22–23, which explicitly mentions a virgin (παρθένος), then, far from undermining the possibility of a particular allusion to Gen 17:19 in Matt 1:20–21, actually supports it. The formula quotation contained in the immediate co-text shows that the topic concerns extraordinary conception. In short, given the extensive syntactic parallelism and intriguing thematic correspondence, Matt 1:20–21 alludes specifically to Gen 17:19 LXX. It is not a case of Matt 1:21 alone apart from 1:20 employing a generic birth formula found throughout the Old Testament, of which Gen 17:19 LXX is merely one example.

6.5 SUMMARY

In the first chapter, then, the Model Reader has found three potential evocations of the figure of Isaac. The first two instances (Matt 1:1 and the genealogy) are somewhat elusive and ambiguous, but the third (Matt 1:18–25) is unmistakable, which, in turn, suggests to the Model Reader that the figure of Isaac is indeed to be actualized in the prior two possibilities. At this point, the Model Reader begins to wonder whether these hints of Isaac might portend a more significant role for the figure of Isaac in the entire Gospel. Isaac, like Jesus, was conceived under the most extraordinary circumstances. Isaac's (near) sacrifice was paradigmatic for the temple and its sacrifices as well as the sacrifices of martyrs; the Model Reader wonders if Jesus, having enjoyed a birth like that of Isaac, might also be called to endure a death like that of Isaac.

⁵⁹ In other loci, however, God does indeed effect conception in otherwise healthy women of childbearing age who were barren. For instance, in Gen 29:31, the LORD opens Leah's womb, while leaving Rachel barren. In subsequent verses (32–35), the *τίκτω-καλέω-ὄνομα* formula is found frequently as Leah gives birth repeatedly. In 30:22–24, the same pattern emerges: God opens Rachel's womb, she conceives and bears a son, and calls his name Joseph. On one hand, God is in control of everything in nature; on the other hand, the conceptions of Isaac and Jesus were extraordinary and in that sense outside the regular course of nature, or "supernatural."

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE BAPTISM OF GOD'S BELOVED SON

The three potential evocations of the figure of Isaac in the first chapter of the Gospel are intriguing, but perhaps not of sufficient significance in and of themselves to establish that the Gospel of Matthew operates with a thoroughgoing Isaac typology beyond the first chapter. In the scene of the baptism, however, the Model Reader discovers allusions to Gen 22, a discovery which suggests that Jesus will mirror Isaac not only in birth but also in death.

7.1 VERBAL CORRESPONDENCE:

THE INTERTEXTUAL DISPOSITION OF THE HEAVENLY VOICE

7.1.1 *Verbal Correspondence between Matt 3:17 and Gen 22:2, 11–12, 15–16*

It is often noted that both Matt 3:17 and Gen 22:2, 12, and 16 contain the word ἀγαπητός, but there is more correspondence than that single word. In Matt 3:17b, the Model Reader encounters the following:

οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα

In suggestively similar language, God ordered Abraham to take his beloved son Isaac and sacrifice him (Gen 22:2 LXX):

καὶ εἶπεν λαβὲ τὸν υἱόν σου τὸν ἀγαπητόν ὃν ἠγάπησας τὸν Ισαακ

In Gen 22:12 (the angel's command to Abraham to halt the ritual) and 16 (the LORD's affirmation of the promise), the same syntactical pattern appears:

οὐκ ἐφείσω τοῦ υἱοῦ σου τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ δι' ἐμέ

Thus, Gen 22:2, 12, and 16 on one hand and Matt 3:17 on the other share five words in precise sequence (allowing for the necessary changes in person and case), a fact often neglected. The former verses describe Isaac as the beloved son of Abraham, while the latter verse deems Jesus the beloved Son of God.

The Model Reader encounters even more syntactic parallelism, more verbal correspondence, however. Examinations of the Matthean baptismal scene also overlook the further allusive possibilities afforded by consideration of Gen 22:11 and 15. When these are taken into account as well, further correspondence appears:

Matt 3:17: καὶ ἰδοὺ φωνὴ ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν λέγουσα· οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα

Gen 22:11–12: καὶ ἐκάλεσεν αὐτὸν ἄγγελος κυρίου ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Ἀβρααμ Ἀβρααμ ὁ δὲ εἶπεν ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ καὶ εἶπεν μὴ ἐπιβάλης τὴν χειρὰ σου ἐπὶ τὸ παιδάριον μηδὲ ποιήσης αὐτῷ μηδὲν νῦν γὰρ ἔγνω ὅτι φοβῆται τὸν θεὸν σὺ καὶ οὐκ ἐφείσω τοῦ υἱοῦ σου τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ δι' ἐμέ

Gen 22:15–16: καὶ ἐκάλεσεν ἄγγελος κυρίου τὸν Ἀβρααμ δευτέρου ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λέγων κατ' ἐμαντοῦ ὅμοσα λέγει κύριος οὗ εἵνεκεν ἐποίησας τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο καὶ οὐκ ἐφείσω τοῦ υἱοῦ σου τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ δι' ἐμέ

Thus, not only does Matt 3:17 have ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός in common with Gen 22:2, 12 and 16; both Matt 3:17 and Gen 22:11 and 15 share the phrase ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν/ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ as well. Further, the Matthean heavenly voice parallels the angel calling to Abraham. In short, the Matthean baptism of Jesus and the biblical Akedah share conspicuously similar language. In the latter, heaven declares that Isaac is the beloved son; in the former, heaven declares that Jesus is the beloved Son. As Wisse Dekker argues in an incisive but neglected Dutch article, it is as if God is saying “This is my Isaac,” with all that could imply:

Wij concluderen: wanneer de synoptische evangeliën verhalen dat Jezus bij doop en verheerlijking door God wordt gequalificeerd als ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός... dan ist dat een verwijzing naar de Aqedath Jischaq, en dan heeft dit de waarde van “deze is mijn Isaac,” waarbij ἀγαπητός overwegend de nuance heeft van *einige*.¹

¹ “We conclude: when the synoptic gospels say at the baptism and transfiguration that Jesus is qualified by God as ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός... then that is an allusion to the Aqedat Yitzhak, and then this phrase has the significance of ‘this is my Isaac,’ in which ἀγαπητός chiefly has the import of only.” Wisse Dekker, “De ‘geliefde zoon’ in de synoptische evangeliën,” *NedTT* 16 (1961): 105–06. Dekker, like C. H. Turner (“Ο ΥΙΟΣ ΜΟΥ Ο ΑΓΑΠΗΤΟΣ,” *JTS* 27 [1926]: 113–29), takes a primarily linguistic approach, being concerned with the proper rendering of ἀγαπητός. Since Isaac is in view, they conclude that the proper rendering is “only.” In a neglected Italian article (“L’ΑΓΑΠΗΤΟΣ sinnotteco milla luce della traditione giudaica,” *RivB* 26 [1978]: 2–32, esp. 4–15), Alfredo Scattolon noted the insufficiency of a purely linguistic approach and insisted upon drawing on Jewish traditions of Isaac.

Ancient Christians also connected Jesus' baptism with Gen 22. In what appears to be a reference to the baptism of Jesus in a likely Christian interpolation, *T. Levi* 18:6–7 reads:

The heavens will be opened, and from the temple of glory sanctification will come upon him, with a fatherly voice, as from Abraham to Isaac. And the glory of the most high shall burst forth upon him. And the spirit of understanding and sanctification shall rest upon him (in the water).²

More certain is the explicit connection made by John Chrysostom in his forty-seventh homily on Genesis:

All this [i.e., the events of the Akedah], however, happened as a type of the Cross. Hence Christ too said of the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was delighted" [John 8:56]. How did he see it if he lived so long before? In type, in shadow: just as in our text the sheep was offered in place of Isaac, so here the rational lamb was offered for the world. You see, it was necessary that the truth be sketched out ahead of time in shadow: an only-begotten son in that case, an only-begotten in this; dearly loved in that case, dearly loved in this. "This is my beloved son," Scripture says, in fact, "in whom I have found satisfaction" [Matt 3:17]. The former was offered as a burnt offering by his Father, and the latter his Father surrendered.³

Chrysostom is one of many patristic interpreters who make broad typological connections between Abraham the father and Isaac the beloved son on one hand and God the Father and Jesus the beloved Son on

² Trans. Howard Clark Kee, "The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A New Translation and Introduction," *OTP* 1:775–828. The text, date, provenance and significance of this passage are contested. Marinus de Jonge thinks Christian interpolations in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs are many; see idem, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Assen: van Gorcum, 1953); idem, "Christian Influence in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," *NovT* 4 (1960): 182–235; and idem, "Once More: Christian Influence in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," *NovT* 5 (1962): 311–19. Other scholars, however, see them as a predominantly Jewish work, dated between 150 and 100 B.C.E., with few Christian interpolations; see Marc Philonenko, *Les interpolations chrétiennes des Testaments des Douze Patriarches et les manuscrits de Qumrân* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960); André Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran* (trans. Geza Vermes; Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1973); F. M. Braun, "Les Testaments des XII Patriarches et le problème de leur origine," *RB* 67 (1960): 516–49; and Kee, 777–78. For his part, Kee contends that *T. Levi* 18:6–7 refers to Maccabean priest-kings, the only interpolation being "in the water" in the last phrase.

³ *Hom. Gen.* 47.14 (= PG 54:432; trans. Robert C. Hill, *Saint John Chrysostom: Homilies on Genesis* 46–67 [FC 87; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992], 14–24).

the other (as we have seen). Here, however, Chrysostom does so with particular reference to the Matthean form of the baptism.⁴

7.1.2 *The Critical Consensus on the Intertextual Disposition of the Heavenly Voice: Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1*

Most modern interpreters, however, discount the possibility that the Matthean baptism evokes echoes of Isaac, finding instead allusions to Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1 in Matt 3:17 (and its presumed Markan predecessor, Mark 1:11);⁵ οὕτως ἐστὶν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός alludes to the former and ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα to the latter, while ὁ ἀγαπητός is either ignored

⁴ The Markan formulation employs the second person (σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, Mark 1:11), as does the identical Lukan formulation (Luke 3:22).

⁵ For instance: Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 1:336–43; Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel with Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), 29–31; John P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church, and Morality in the First Gospel* (New York: Paulist, 1979), 28; R. T. France, *The Gospel according to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 96; and idem, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1998), 293. Some scholars find no reference to Ps 2:7, including Joachim Jeremias and Walther Zimmerli, *The Servant of God* (Naperville, Ill.: A. R. Allenson, 1957), 80–81; Jeremias, “παῖς θεοῦ,” *TDNT* 5:654–717, 701; Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 66; idem, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1958), 16–17; R. H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (London: Collins, 1969), 170; and Ferdinand Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology: Their History in Early Christianity* (New York: World Publishing Co., 1969), 336. Luz does not discuss the possibility of a reference to Ps 2:7. Luz does assert, however, that the empirical Matthew is not quoting Isa 42:1 in Matt 3:17, but rather simply Mark 1:11 (*Matthäus*, 1 [rev. ed.]: 214–15). Other scholars who are skeptical about allusions to Isa 42:1 in the Gospels of Mark or Matthew include Paul G. Bretscher, “Exodus 4 22–23 and the Voice from Heaven,” *JBL* 87 (1968): 303–04; Joachim Gnllka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (2 vols.; Zürich: Benziger, 1978), 1:53; and Philipp Vielhauer, *Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1965), 205–06. Some interpreters find references to Ps 2:7, Gen 22, and Isa 42:1 in Matt 3:17: Francis Wright Beare, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 100–04; Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist*, 95, 130; idem, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 104 (Carter also mentions Exod 4:22–23, Bretcher’s suggestion); Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (SP 1; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991), 62–65; and A. H. McNeile, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indices* (ICC; London: Macmillan, 1915; repr. 1980), 32–33. Some interpreters think a reference to Gen 22 is present and decisive, such as Ernest Best, *The Temptation and Passion: The Markan Soteriology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 169–72; Daly, “Soteriological Significance,” 68–71; Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 367; Vermes, “Redemption and Genesis xxii,” 222–23; and Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1958), 180.

or considered a translation of בַּחִיר from Isa 42:1 MT. For instance, representing the consensus of commentators who emphasize the significance of Isa 42:1, Joachim Gnilka writes:

Als atl Hintergrund ist für Mt in erster Linie an Is 42, 1 zu denken. Gottes Geist und Wohlgefallen ruhen auf dem erwählten Knecht. Das Interesse an Is 42, 1 ff bekundet E [= the evangelist] in 12, 18–21, wo er den Text im Zusammenhang der Krankenheiligung Jesu ausführlich zitiert. Ein Reflex von Gen 22,2 ist nicht zu vermuten. Isaak heißt zwar der geliebte Sohn, aber in bezug auf seinen Vater Abraham.⁶

As we shall shortly see, however, the relevance of the citation of Isa 42:1 in Matt 12:18 for the baptism is problematic, for the phrase in Matt 3:17 does not well match what is found in Matt 12:18. In Matt 12:18, Isa 42:1 may be “ausführlich zitiert,” but its peculiar form bedevils any attempt to provide a decisive estimation of its significance. Further, it does not follow that Isaac’s being Abraham’s beloved son means that Gen 22 is not in view here. In the Matthean typology, God the Father takes up the role of Abraham and Jesus the role of Isaac. Gnilka’s comment reflects a lack of literary and theological imagination.

Beare, while finding allusions to Isa 42:1 and Gen 22:2, is representative of the consensus of commentators who call significant attention to Ps 2:7 as well:

The words spoken by the voice from heaven begin as if to cite a “decree of the Lord,” which bears in the first instance upon the promise of world sovereignty to the King of Israel. It represents the King, either at his coronation or at an anniversary celebration, declaring that the Lord has recognized, or adopted, him as his son, and assures him that he will subdue all his rivals with violence, and extend his rule to the ends of the earth... The phrase “You are my son” is all that is given here (in Mark it appears in this precise form, but Matthew has transposed it into the third person, “this is my son”).⁷

Beare’s concessive caveat in the last sentence above hints at the difficulties involved in seeing an allusion to Ps 2:7 (or, as Beare suggests, a larger section of Ps 2 and the entire Psalm itself). For the Matthean text—what the empirical author actually wrote down, regardless of whatever he might have had in mind—has very little correspondence

⁶ Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium* (2 vols.; HTKNT 1; Freiburg: Herder, 1986), 1:79.

⁷ Beare, *Matthew*, 101.

with Ps 2:7.⁸ It is difficult to maintain that οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου (Matt 3:17) is intended as an allusion to the anarthrous phrase υἱός μου εἰ σύ (Ps 2:7 LXX), particularly if one adopts a redaction-critical view that assumes Markan priority, since the empirical author of Matthew would then have altered the supposed Markan allusion (σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου) with the result that it resembles Ps 2:7 (υἱός μου εἰ σύ) even less. The precise verbal correspondence between Matthew 3:17 and Gen 22:2, 11–12, and 15–16 is much more impressive, but the common ascription of the phrase ὁ υἱός μου in Matt 3:17 to Ps 2:7 has functioned to cleave it from ὁ ἀγαπητός, which, in turn, has caused interpreters to miss the extensive verbal correspondence shared between the Matthean heavenly baptismal voice and Gen 22.

The single word ἀγαπητός, however, must be accounted for, and, instead of seeing an allusion to Gen 22 and interpreting the Matthean text itself, many interpreters opt for a reconstruction of tradition history and assume the empirical Matthew had that “in mind.” In his article *παῖς θεοῦ* in *TWNT/TDNT*, Jeremias asserted what has now become a scholarly commonplace, that behind the word ἀγαπητός in the baptismal voice lies the *בְּחִיר* of Isa 42:1 MT.⁹ Jeremias writes:

The thesis that the voice at the baptism was originally based on Is. 42:1 alone is supported by many considerations. First, the heavenly voice in Mk. 1:11 is obviously designed to explain the impartation of the Spirit (1:10) as a fulfillment of Scripture. As so often in OT quotations, e.g., in Rabb. literature, the continuation: *θήσω τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπ’ αὐτόν* (Is. 42:1 acc. to Mt. 12:18c), is implied but not directly cited. The voice from heaven is thus saying that the promise of the Spirit in Is. 42:1 has just been fulfilled. Secondly, when the text of the saying from heaven at the baptism and transfiguration vacillates between ἀγαπητός (Mk. 1:11 and par.; 9:7 par. Mt. 17:5 and Lk. 9:35 vl.; 2 Pt. 1:17) and ἐκλεκτός (Lk. 9:35), these are presumably alternative renderings of *בְּחִיר* in Is. 42:1, which is sometimes transl. ἐκλεκτός (LXX ΣΘ), sometimes ἀγαπητός (Mt. 12:18). Thirdly, in Jn. 1:34 the voice from heaven at baptism acc. to what seems to be the oldest text...runs: οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἐκλεκτός τοῦ θεοῦ. But “the elect of God” is a Messianic title deriving from Is. 42:1[.] Jn. 1:34 shows

⁸ A point observed by Bretscher, “Exodus 4 22–23,” 302.

⁹ Jeremias, *TDNT*, 5:700–02. It is noteworthy that Jeremias, the scholar who has perhaps done the most to discount the possibility of an allusion to Gen 22 in the baptism, is also the scholar whose work has done the most to promote the concept of the Suffering Servant in New Testament studies.

plainly that the voice at the baptism must have been originally a uniform quotation from Is. 42:1. If so, this confirms the fact... that designation of Jesus as *παῖς θεοῦ* [i.e., the "Suffering Servant"] belongs to a very ancient (pre-Marcian) stratum of the tradition.¹⁰

Above all, it must be noted that this is an exercise in tradition history that may not have any bearing on the Matthean text *per se* in the form in which we have it. Jeremias is seeking to reconstruct a hypothetical original behind what any of the synoptic evangelists actually wrote.¹¹ Moreover, it is not at all obvious that the voice pertains to Scriptural fulfillment. Furthermore, it is far from certain that "the elect of God" is a Messianic title deriving from Is. 42:1" or that John 1:34 itself alludes to Isa 42:1.

Most debatable is his second enumerated point, that ἀγαπητός and ἐκλελεγμένος are "alternative renderings of בְּחִיר in Is. 42:1." This assertion relies solely on the presence of ἀγαπητός in Matt 12:18. Not once does the LXX render בְּחִיר with ἀγαπητός (or ἀγαπάω, for that matter). The only location which may do so is Matt 12:18, but, as we will see, good reasons exist for seeing the Matthean citation of Isa 42:1 explained by the Matthean baptismal voice, and not vice-versa.

The treatment of the Matthean baptism by Davies and Allison incorporates all the scholarly commonplaces detailed above: they find allusions to Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1 but not Gen 22, relying largely upon Jeremias's reconstructed tradition history. They assert:

Whatever one concludes about the tradition history of Mk 1:11, we may be confident that Matthew saw in Mt 3:17 a confirmation of the truth of Jesus' divine sonship as proclaimed in Ps 2 and the truth of his being the Spirit-endowed servant of Deutero-Isaiah.¹²

Therefore, in light of the presumed influence of Ps 2 and Isa 42 upon Matthew's text, "any allusion to Isaac...could only be secondary at

¹⁰ Ibid., 701–02. All apparent typos in the paragraph are *sic*.

¹¹ Approaching the question of the heavenly voice from a tradition-critical perspective as well, Bretscher is most explicit about this: "The narrative settings are not helpful toward recovering the meaning of that sentence, for they contain a considerable overlay of later interpretation and application" ("Exodus 4 22–23," 301).

¹² Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 1:339. Davies and Allison go so far as to suggest that Jesus himself saw himself as the Suffering Servant (1:343). I would wager that if the historical Jesus did indeed envision his mission in sacrificial terms, he saw himself not in terms of any Servant figure, but in terms of Isaac, who, after all, was the paradigm of sacrifice in Jewish tradition and whose death was associated with Passover.

best.”¹³ The procedure by which these conclusions are reached involves (1) reconstructing the tradition history of the baptism, (2) assuming that the empirical author of Matthew had that in mind, and then (3) ascribing that meaning to the Matthean text, in spite, to a large extent, of that which the empirical author actually wrote as that text. This procedure attempts to explain what is said by what is presumed to have been meant. That, in turn, involves ignoring the very form of that which is actually written in the text at hand. But should we not presume that the empirical author intended that which is written to be read in the form in which it was written?

One should also note that for Davies and Allison, the words ὁ υἱός μου (even though the match with the anarthrous phrase in Ps 2:7 is imprecise at best) and ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα result in the broadest of exegetical claims: the former evokes all of Ps 2 and thus Jesus’ divine Messianic sonship, while the latter conjures up not just Isa 42:1 or Isa 42 as a whole but all of Second Isaiah (a largely meaningless concept for the ancients) and thus the entire putative metaconcept of the Suffering Servant. But one would be justified in asking (1) whether these words can bear the weight which Davies and Allison (and other commentators) would have them bear; (2) whether one may indeed be so confident that the empirical author of Matthew himself “saw” and “heard” such things; and (3) whether the Matthean text itself would have the original hearers (or, within the language of the theory employed in the present project, the Model Reader) make such connections.

In their analysis of the heavenly voice in Matt 3:17, Davies and Allison present a chart of six texts for comparison, comprising Mark 1:11, Matt 3:17, Ps 2:7 LXX, Isa 42:1 MT, Isa 42:1 LXX and Isa 42:1 as found in Matt 12:18. Gen 22 is absent, subtly suggesting to the reader of the commentary that it is unimportant; given the verbal links between Matt 3:17 and Gen 22, however, its absence is curious.¹⁴ I shall include Gen 22 here in addition to the other texts:

¹³ Ibid., 1:341.

¹⁴ Ibid., 1:336–37.



<u>Mark 1:11</u> καὶ φωνὴ ἐγένετο ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα	<u>Ps 2:7b LXX</u> κύριος εἶπεν πρὸς με υἱός μου εἶ σύ ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε	<u>Matt 3:17</u> καὶ ἰδοὺ φωνὴ ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν λέγουσα οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα
<u>Isa 42:1 MT</u> יְהוָה עֲבָדֵי אֱתֵמְדְּבוּ בְחַיִּי רַצַּת נַפְשִׁי	<u>Isa 42:1a LXX</u> Ἰακωβ ὁ παῖς μου ἀντιλήμψομαι αὐτοῦ Ἰσραὴλ ὁ ἐκλεκτός μου προσεδέξατο αὐτὸν ἢ ψυχὴ μου	<u>Isa 42:1a in Matt 12:18a</u> ἰδοὺ ὁ παῖς μου ὃν ἡρέτισα, ὁ ἀγαπητός μου εἰς ὃν εὐδόκησεν ἡ ψυχὴ μου
<u>Gen 22:2a</u> καὶ εἶπεν λαβὲ τὸν υἱόν σου τὸν ἀγαπητόν ὃν ἠγάπησας τὸν Ἰσαακ	<u>Gen 22:11a, 12b</u> καὶ ἐκάλεσεν αὐτὸν ἄγγελος κυρίου ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ εἶπεν...οὐκ ἐφείσω τοῦ υἱοῦ σου τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ δι' ἐμέ	<u>Gen 22:15, 16c</u> καὶ ἐκάλεσεν ἄγγελος κυρίου τὸν Ἀβραάμ δεύτερον ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λέγων... οὐκ ἐφείσω τοῦ υἱοῦ σου τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ δι' ἐμέ

Davies and Allison make five observations:¹⁵ (1) Isa 42:1 LXX has no link with the baptismal voice. (2) Ps 2:7 is closest to Mark's εἶ ὁ υἱός μου, and Ps 2:7 is cited in early discussions of the baptism (e.g., the variant reading D of Luke 3:22, Justin, Clement of Alexandria). (3) "Mark's ὁ ἀγαπητός has—if we leave aside for the moment suggestions of influence from Gen 22:2, 12, 16 and Exod 4:22–3—its only parallel in Isa 42:1 as this is quoted in Matt 12.18" and "'beloved' is elsewhere attested as an epithet of the servant (cf. Isa 44:2 LXX; Mart. Poly. 14; Ep. Diog. 8.9–11)."¹⁶ (4) Lacking any counterpart in Ps 2:7 or Isa 42:1 LXX, "ἐν σοὶ (ᾧ) εὐδόκησα...evidently represents an independent translation of the Hebrew of Isa 42:1."¹⁷ (5) "The parallels between Matt 3:17 and 12:18 all but prove that the first evangelist heard Isa 42:1 in the

¹⁵ Ibid., 1:337–38.

¹⁶ Ibid., 1:337. Emphasis mine. The references provided in regard to the "Servant" as "beloved" do not support what they are supposed to support, as we shall soon see.

¹⁷ Ibid. Note that Davies and Allison do not differentiate here between the Matthean and Markan versions.

voice at the Jordan[.]”¹⁸ Davies and Allison conclude, “the most natural explanation of the five facts cited would seem to be that of common opinion: the first line of our text is from or has been influenced by Ps 2.7 (LXX?) while the next two lines are derived from a non-LXX version of Isa 42:1.”¹⁹

Their analysis has problems, however. In light of the significant syntactical similarities between Matt 3:17 (as well as Mark 1:11) and Gen 22, the omission of Gen 22 from the table and their discussion is singularly unfortunate. The possibility of allusions to Gen 22 is thus not seriously explored but rather simply written off several paragraphs later as “secondary at best”; the “suggestions of influence from Gen 22:2, 12, 16” are indeed left aside, but not merely “for the moment”; they are in fact never taken up again in the course of the commentary except to be summarily dismissed. In short, their analysis substitutes a possible tradition history for exegesis of the Matthean text as the empirical author composed it. The presumed content behind the text has eclipsed the particular form of the text.

Going into more detail, the facts given cannot bear the significance—for the Gospel of Matthew at least—that Davies and Allison would have them bear. As noted above, the Matthean version of the heavenly voice is further from Ps 2:7 LXX than the Markan version, and the Markan version, for its part, is a poor match with Ps 2:7 LXX to begin with: the word order is significantly different and the phrase in Ps 2:7 LXX (as we have it) is anarthrous. Even if the first line of the Matthean version of the heavenly voice has been “influenced” by Ps 2:7, that does not mean that the empirical author of Matthew perceived it in the Markan version, and, even if he did, that he intended it to be perceived by his readers, and, even if he did so intend, that the Matthean Model Reader should necessarily perceive such an allusion here. The question concerns whether the formal arrangement of the signs of the text itself present the allusion and precipitate the echo.

That other tradents may have heard Ps 2:7 is indeed suggestive but ultimately not probative given the weakness of the remainder of the evidence. Bretscher contends that Justin Martyr is the first to link the baptismal voice with Ps 2:7.²⁰ The import of Justin’s witness is not

¹⁸ Ibid., 1:337–38.

¹⁹ Ibid., 1:338.

²⁰ Bretscher, “Exodus 4 22–23,” 301.

perfectly clear, however, for Justin's version of the heavenly voice does not refer to Jesus as the beloved Son, as the synoptic tradition has it, but rather suggests that the heavenly voice uttered the very words of Ps 2:7 itself:

[B]ut then the Holy Ghost...lighted on Him in the form of a dove, and there came at the same instant from the heavens a voice, which was uttered also by David when he spoke, personating Christ, what the Father would say to Him: "Thou art My Son: this day have I begotten Thee"; saying that His generation would take place for men, at the time when they would become acquainted with Him: "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten thee."²¹ (*Dial.* 88)

For this devil, when [Jesus] went up from the river Jordan, at the time when the voice spake to Him, "Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten Thee," is recorded in the memoirs of the apostles to have come to Him and tempted Him.²² (*Dial.* 103)

On one hand, Justin does associate the heavenly voice with Ps 2:7. On the other hand, Justin gives an account of the heavenly voice that is simply not found in the synoptic baptismal tradition as we have it.

In short, one should not conclude with any modicum of confidence that the empirical author of Matthew wanted his readers or auditors to find in the heavenly voice "a confirmation of the truth of Jesus' divine sonship as proclaimed in Ps 2[.]"²³ Seeing a reference to Ps 2:7 here, however, does have the unfortunate effect of severing ὁ υἱός μου from ὁ ἀγαπητός, which, in turn, causes one to miss the significant syntactical correspondence with Gen 22:2, 12 and 16.

With reference to Isa 42:1, Davies's and Allison's first point is obvious: the syntax of the baptismal voice does not match Isa 42:1 LXX. Maintaining a tie to Isa 42:1 thus necessitates their fifth point, that the "parallels between Matt 3:17 and 12:18 all but prove that the first evangelist heard Isa 42:1 in the voice at the Jordan[.]" This is an Achilles' heel. Not only does the Matthean baptismal voice not match Isa 42:1 LXX; it does not well match Isa 42:1 as cited in Matt 12:18 either (ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα and εἰς ὃν εὐδόκησεν, respectively). If the empirical author of Matthew had been so concerned to have readers identify an allusion to Isa 42:1 here, the syntax could easily have been made identical. Noting the difference, Luz concludes:

²¹ Trans. Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF* 1:244.

²² Trans. Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF* 1:251.

²³ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 1:339.

Der völlig andere Wortlaut des Erfüllungszitates 12,18 zeigt aber, daß Mt hier [i.e., Matt 3:17] nicht Jes 42,1 zitieren wollte, sondern die Himmelstimme von Mk 1,11. Hingegen hat er das Erfüllungszitat 12,18 an die Himmelstimme angepaßt und somit Jes 42,1—mit dem für die Taufgeschichte wichtigen V 1b—vielleicht erstmalig (!) auf die Taufe Jesu bezogen.²⁴

Employing either Luz's redaction-critical approach or a more text-centered approach, it is simply problematic to maintain that Isa 42:1 is to be found in the heavenly voice of the baptism. Rather, it would be more efficient to say that the heavenly voice as represented by ὁ ἀγαπητός μου is to be found in the Matthean version of Isa 42:1, and thus that ὁ ἀγαπητός μου in Matt 12:18 also presents Jesus as the beloved Son, the new Isaac.²⁵

This undercuts Davies's and Allison's third point, that behind ἀγαπητός in Matt 3:17 ultimately stands בְּחִיר. We simply do not know what precise version(s) of the MT tradition the empirical author of Matthew had at his disposal and to what degree that author is responsible for the precise shape of the formula citations. One cannot say with a significant degree of confidence that the author is reading בְּחִיר in a copy of Isaiah in the MT tradition and writing ἀγαπητός, or that this happened in an earlier stage of the tradition and the author intends his readers to grasp it, or that an empirical reader or hearer or the Model Reader should read it in such a way. In light of the syntactical match with Gen 22:2, 11–12, and 15–16, if the author is indeed reading a text in the MT tradition, it is much more likely that behind the Matthean ἀγαπητός stands not the בְּחִיר of Isa 42:1 MT but the יְחִיד of Gen 22 MT. This would be a simpler solution. In any event, however, the Model Reader (reading the text that the empirical author actually wrote) finds little reason at Matt 3:17 to actualize Isa 42:1, but much reason to actualize Gen 22.

Moreover, the suggestion that the so-called Servant was known as "beloved" (which Davies and Allison leave undemonstrated) cannot pass unchallenged. First, Isa 44:2 LXX is not part of a Servant Song as defined by modern scholarship, the "Servant" in Isa 44:2 LXX is not

²⁴ Luz, *Matthäus*, 1:214–15. Bretscher concurs as well: "The case for Isa 42 1 falters above all, however, in its dependence on the version of it found in Matt 12 18" ("Exodus 4 22–23," 303); so too Novakovic, *Messiah*, 138.

²⁵ Some scholars associate Isaac with the figure of the Suffering Servant. See, for instance, Rosenberg, "Jesus, Isaac, and the Suffering Servant"; and Vermes, "Redemption," 218–25.

anonymous but explicitly named Jacob, and it is Israel who is described not as “beloved” with the adjective ἀγαπητός (as Davies and Allison imply) but as “loved” with a participle, ὁ ἡγαπημένος. The entire sentence reads: μὴ φοβοῦ παῖς μου Ἰακωβ καὶ ὁ ἡγαπημένος Ἰσραὴλ ὃν ἐξελεξάμην. As we will see below in discussing Matt 12 and the relevance of the Servant concept for the Gospel of Matthew, not every occurrence of παῖς or δοῦλος evokes the entire modern metaconcept of the “Suffering Servant.”

Second, *Mart. Pol.* 14.1 and 3 do in fact describe Jesus Christ as God's beloved παῖς: Κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ καὶ εὐλογητοῦ παιδὸς σου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ πατὴρ... σὲ εὐλογῶ, σὲ δοξάζω διὰ τοῦ αἰωνίου καὶ ἐπουρανίου ἀρχιερέως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἀγαπητοῦ σου παιδός. The one word παῖς, however, does not necessarily indicate that the whole metaconcept of the Servant is in view. In fact, the entire passage is reminiscent of Gen 22, which would thus suggest that early Christians were interpreting Jesus as an antitype of Isaac as beloved, not the supposed Servant.²⁶

In early Christian usage παῖς may simply refer to the concept of Jesus' generic sonship, as seems to be the case in Davies's and Allison's third reference to early Christian literature, *Ep. Diog.* 8.9–11. We begin with v. 7 for the sake of context:

For God, the Master and Creator of all, the one who created all things and set them in order, was not only benevolent but also patient. Indeed he was always this way, and is and will be: kind and good and without anger and true. He alone is good. And when he had a great and inexpressible thought, he communicated it to his child alone (μόνῳ τῷ παιδί). And so, as long as he enshrouded it in a mystery and kept his wise plan to himself,

²⁶ *Mart. Pol.* 14.1–3: “So they did not nail him, but they tied him. And when he put his hands behind his back and was tied, he was like an exceptional ram taken from a great flock for a sacrifice, prepared as a whole burnt offering that is acceptable to God. Looking up into heaven he said, ‘Lord God Almighty, Father of your beloved and blessed Child Jesus Christ, through whom we have received knowledge of you, the God of angels, of powers, and of all creation, and of every race of the upright who live before you, I bless you for making me worthy of this day and hour, that I may receive a share among the number of the martyrs in the cup of your Christ, unto the resurrection of eternal life in both soul and body in the immortality of the Holy Spirit. Among them may I be received before you today as a sacrifice that is rich and acceptable, just as you prepared and revealed in advance and now fulfilled—the true God who does not lie. For this reason and for all things I praise you, I bless you, I glorify you through the eternal and heavenly high priest Jesus Christ, your beloved child, through whom be glory to you, with him and the Holy Spirit, both now and for the ages to come. Amen’” (trans. Ehrman, LCL).

he seemed not to care for us or give us any heed. But when he revealed it through his beloved child (διὰ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ παιδός) and showed the things prepared from the beginning, he shared all things with us at once, that we might participate in and see and understand his kindly acts. Who among us would have ever expected these things?²⁷

Like the previous passages, this selection in no way conclusively demonstrates that “‘beloved’ is . . . an epithet of the servant[.]”²⁸ Παῖς is simply too polyvalent in the LXX and in Jewish and Christian tradition to warrant such a conclusion. The word is best translated “child” here, simply referring to Jesus’ eternal sonship, especially in light of the cosmogonic context of *Ep. Diog.* 8 and the lack of any reference to concepts modern scholarship has seen connected to the figure of the Servant: Messiahship, suffering, vicarious atonement.

In short, we have no reason to be as confident as Davies and Allison that the empirical author of Matthew “saw” and “heard” Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1 in the voice at the baptism. Even if such texts were part of the baptismal tradition at some level, one finds no compelling redactional evidence that the author saw and heard these texts. It may be that exegetes are hearing voices here, echoes of subsumed tradition that the specific shape of the Matthean text actually mutes, potential echoes that the Model Reader should leave narcotized. In such tradition- and redaction-critical readings, there is a danger that the referential function may prematurely supplant the poetic function. To the extent that this happens, the Matthean text in the form that the empirical author composed it will remain unread and thus misunderstood. On the theory employed in the present project, however, we are not ultimately concerned with the hidden mental intentions of the empirical author but rather with how the Model Reader should read the Matthean baptism.²⁹ What allusions, if any, does the Model Reader perceive, and what echoes are precipitated thereby?

²⁷ Trans. Ehrman, LCL.

²⁸ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 1:337.

²⁹ As noted in the introduction, however, the Model Reader reflects the *intentio operis* and could thus serve as an index to the intention and world of the evangelist and his readers. Again, interpreting for intention should involve reading all that an evangelist wrote as he wrote it, which redaction criticism in practice does not do.

7.1.3 *The Model Reader's Preliminary Conclusions*

At this point in the narrative, the Model Reader has encountered three instances where it is indeed possible to hear echoes of Isaac: Matt 1:1, the genealogy in Matt 1:2–17, and (the strongest possibility) the allusion to Gen 17:19 LXX in Matt 1:20–21. Thus, the Model Reader is intrigued by the verbal, syntactical similarities between Matt 3:17 and Gen 22:2, 11–12 and 15–16 and perceives a high degree of volume between the two passages. The Model Reader therefore does not actualize Ps 2:7, since (1) the verbal signs which would point there are contained within the signs which point decisively to Gen 22, and since (2) the verbal signs in question lack the volume necessary to see a significant syntactical match to Ps 2:7.

The final phrase of Matt 3:17 remains polyvalent at this point, rich with poetic potential. The Model Reader considers verses that contain εὐδοκέω, such as Jer 2:19, 14:10, and 14:12, verses in which God is most definitely not pleased with his people Israel. In Jer 14:10b we find ὁ θεὸς οὐκ εὐδόκησεν ἐν αὐτοῖς νῦν μνησθήσεται τῶν ἀδικιῶν αὐτῶν. A reference to Israel's failings here in the heavenly voice would make much sense in light of Jesus' faithfulness as the embodiment of Israel in Matt 4:1–11 and in light of the fact that Jeremiah is a significant text for the Gospel of Matthew. In light of the co-text of Matt 2–4, chapters in which Jesus is presented as the embodiment of Israel and in which representatives of Israel are cast in a negative light (i.e., Herod, as well as the Pharisees and Sadducees, who endure the Baptist's calumny in Matt 3:7–10) and in light of the significance of Jeremiah for the Gospel of Matthew,³⁰ it may make good sense for the Model Reader to see an allusion to one of these verses here. Or, alternatively, in light of the emphasis on Jesus as "son of David" in the Gospel, the Model Reader may also find the presence of εὐδοκέω in 2 Sam 22:20 significant, in which David sings praise to God: "and he [κύριος] brought me into a wide place, and rescued me, because he delighted in me (ὅτι εὐδόκησεν ἐν ἐμοί)." If the Model Reader were to perceive a reference to David

³⁰ For the significance of Jeremiah for the Gospel of Matthew, see Michael Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel: The Rejected Prophet Motif in Matthaean Redaction* (JSNTSup 68; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993); and David M. Moffitt, "Righteous Bloodshed, Matthew's Passion Narrative and the Temple's Destruction: Lamentations as a Matthean Intertext," *JBL* 125 (2006): 299–320.

here, there would then be a parallel situation in Matt 3:17 to Matt 1:1: both Isaac and David would find mention.

Further, the Model Reader has a difficult time seeing ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα as an independent translation of Isa 42:1 MT, which reads רצתה נפשי. The verse presents nothing prepositional such as בו to match Matt 3:17's ἐν ᾧ,³¹ and the MT's נפשי does not find its way into Matt 3:17. Even if the Model Reader should perceive an allusion to Isa 42:1 here, it does not necessarily follow that the whole tradition of the Suffering Servant must be actualized. Rather, in light of the citation of Isa 42:1–4 in Matt 12:18–21, it may simply be Isa 42:1–4 that would be actualized. Such an approach would fit well with the Matthean emphasis on Gentile inclusion, since Isa 42:1–4 (particularly in the Matthean version) promises good things to the Gentiles. Thus, the Model Reader could come to believe that the death of the beloved Son Jesus at the hands of his enemies will ultimately result in the mission of the “servant” of Isa 42:1–4 in particular to the Gentiles.

If we may briefly consider targumic evidence for the sake of curiosity, another option is to see the Matthean ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα as deriving from traditions of the Akedah, for the Markan phrase ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα (Mark 1:11) may have its roots there. Appropriating certain of Schrenk's ideas in *TWNT*, Stegner argues that εὐδοκέω in Mark 1:11 concerns God's election of Jesus,³² noting that the word יחיד—found in the Targums at Gen 22 with reference to Isaac and Abraham and in *Tg. Neof.* with reference to Isaac at Lev 22:27—is a title which “belongs to men who are elected by God.”³³ Further, בחיר, which many interpreters understand to be associated with the Servant, is associated with Isaac in the Targums to Lev 22:27.³⁴ Thus, both יחיד and בחיר are associated with εὐδοκέω and Isaac. Stegner concludes: “While the argument falls short of certainty, as does every other hypothesis for the origin of the words

³¹ Davies and Allison note, however, that Symmachus and Theodotion render Isa 42:1 similarly (*Saint Matthew*, 1:337). Each has ο εκλεκτος μου ον ευδοκησεν η ψυχη μου. The translations attributed to them are likely second or early third century C.E., and thus too late for our purposes; on the other hand, it must be conceded that they may reveal a Hebrew or Greek version of Isa 42:1 containing something like ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα.

³² Stegner, “Baptism,” 339; see Gottlob Schrenk, “εὐδοκέω” *TWNT* 2:738 (= *TDNT* 2:740–41).

³³ Stegner, “Baptism,” 337. See also Fritzleo Lentzen-Deis, *Die Taufe nach den Synoptikern* (Frankfurt am Main: Knecht, 1970), 239–40.

³⁴ Stegner, “Baptism,” 340.

of the heavenly voice, it has the advantage that both parts of the statement were derived from the same story," that is, the Akedah.³⁵

The chief interpretive node calling for the Model Reader's response, then, is the verbal, syntactical allusion to Gen 22. The intertextual frame "Akedah" from the cultural encyclopedia thus comes into play, and the Model Reader must decide which, if any, aspects thereof to actualize. This requires a search for thematic coherence between the topic of the co-text and aspects of the frame of the Akedah. The chief factors that help the Model Reader confirm that Gen 22 is in view are the co-textual topics of mortal threat and obedience, with which the co-text of Matt 2–4 is concerned.

In sum, finding an allusion to Gen 22 is the simplest and most fruitful solution to the intertextual riddle of the Matthean baptismal voice. The intertextual disposition of the voice is poised to produce echoes of Isaac which the Model Reader perceives and delimits on the basis of thematic coherence.

7.2 THEMATIC COHERENCE:

ECHOES OF THE AKEDAH PRODUCED BY THE ALLUSION

7.2.1 *Threat, Obedience, Righteousness*

The topic of the wider co-text—threat—confirms for the Model Reader that the figure of Isaac is indeed in view. The concept of threat pervades Matt 2:1–4:16: the infant Jesus stands under threat from Herod and his son Archelaus in Matt 2; the Pharisees and Sadducees, representative of the Jewish leadership with whom Jesus will have conflict throughout the Gospel, are introduced in Matt 3; the devil tests Jesus in Matt 4:1–11; and the imprisonment of Jesus' forerunner John and Jesus' withdrawal finds mention in Matt 4:12–16. In Matt 3:7–12 and 4:12–16 in particular, the Model Reader finds significant foreshadowing of the conflict Jesus will encounter with the Jewish leadership, while in 4:1–11 the Model Reader finds foreshadowing of the conflict Jesus will encounter with the devil. Both sorts of conflict are two sides of the same coin, for in the Matthean universe of discourse the Jewish

³⁵ Ibid. Further, this would mean that the references to "election" which Jeremias presents as concerning the Servant could actually concern Isaac.

leadership stands under the aegis of Satan (12:34; 13:38–39)³⁶ and will seek to destroy Jesus (12:14; 26:3–5).

Commentators routinely point out that the Matthean baptism and testing scenes emphasize Jesus' obedience as Son to God to his Father. Luz observes that the concept of Jesus' obedience as Son of God "dominates" Matt 3:13–4:11.³⁷ The Model Reader's hypothesis that Matt 3:17 presents an allusion to Gen 22 producing echoes of the Akedah will find confirmation on the basis of the concerns of the co-text, particularly the testing narrative, to which the baptism is tightly tied. Like the Isaac of the Akedah, Jesus faces mortal threat but is nevertheless obedient to the will of his Father. The precise contours and implications, however, are not perfectly clear. The Model Reader thus makes at this point the tentative hypothesis that Jesus may undergo sacrificial death, an abductive inference subject to confirmation or disconfirmation in the process of further reading.

In Matt 2, the Model Reader encounters a mortal threat to the infant Jesus: Herod wants to destroy him (ἀπολέσαι; 2:13; cf. 12:14 and 27:20). Being warned about this in a dream, Joseph takes mother and child and flees to Egypt. Then follows the formula citation of Hos 11:1b in Matt 2:15: "Out of Egypt I called my son," which functions to present Jesus as the embodiment of Israel.³⁸ Further, the formula quotation occurs immediately after the Holy Family travels to Egypt and they do not return from Egypt to Galilee until Matt 2:19–21. The Gospel of Matthew thus subtly describes the infant Jesus' contemporary Israel as Egypt and therefore inverts Egypt and Israel. Further still, it is Herod, the king of Israel, who seeks to destroy Jesus, whereas the Magi, Gentile foreigners, are paying Jesus homage.³⁹ Moreover, Hosea provides no

³⁶ See Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 117: "In the case of the temptation, Jesus' encounter with Satan likewise anticipates Jesus' later encounters with the leaders because Satan is the Evil One with whom they have affinity (12:34; 13:38–39). As the Tempter, the transcendent fountainhead of all evil (4:3; 6:13), Satan three times puts Jesus to the test (4:1–10). As those who are evil (3:7), the religious leaders will similarly repeatedly put Jesus to the test [cf. 16:1, 4; 19:3; 22:18, 35]. In debate with Satan, Jesus has the last word, so that Satan leaves the scene (4:10–11). In debate with the leaders, Jesus will again have the last word, so that, reduced to silence, they, too, will leave the scene (22:46–23:1). If Jesus ultimately bests Satan in conflict, he will also ultimately best the leaders in conflict."

³⁷ Luz, *Theology*, 4–5.

³⁸ See also Exod 4:22–23: "And you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, Israel is my first-born son, and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me."'"

³⁹ See Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 1:262–64, and Soares Prabhu, *Formula Quotations*, 216–28. This reading explains what at first glance appears to be the awkward placement of the formula quotation of Hos 11:1 in Matt 2:15.

heroic recollection of the exodus. Rather, God's love for Israel is contrasted with Israel's abject failure, detailed in Hos 11:2: "The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals, and offering incense to idols" (MT/NRSV). The episode is thus an early instance of the significant Matthean theme of Jesus' conflict with Jewish leadership leading to Gentile inclusion.

This theme continues in Matt 3:1–12, where the Model Reader encounters the account of John the Baptist's call to repentance. John's message is in full accord with the divine will, as shown by the citation of Isa 40:3 in Matt 3:3 (as well as later in 21:25, which presumes John's baptism was "from heaven"). His message concerns the necessity of repentance in light of the advent of the Kingdom (Matt 3:2). "Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region of the Jordan" come out to be baptized, confessing their sins (3:5–6). When the Pharisees and Sadducees seek baptism, however, John excoriates them with language later employed by the Matthean Jesus to the same purpose ("brood of vipers"; 12:34; cf. 23:33). Even though they are coming for baptism, and thus making a show of obeying the divine will, John's words reveal that they are in actual fact disobedient, that obedience is a matter not simply of formal baptism, but of bearing fruit (3:7–8; cf. 12:33; 21:19, 34), which is in line with the emphasis on the necessity of obedient actions and not simply intentions, an emphasis which permeates the Gospel of Matthew (e.g., 5:18–20; 7:15–23; 12:33–37; 12:46–50; 21:28–32; 21:43; 25:1–30; 25:31–46; 28:20). The necessity of real and transformative obedience is stressed in 3:9 (having Abraham as father counts for nothing) and in 3:10–12 (John's words of apocalyptic warning and prediction of the coming of the "the stronger one" who will execute final judgment). John's words suggest that the Pharisees and Sadducees are hypocrites, the first instance of this Matthean theme (cf. 23:28: "So you [scribes and Pharisees] also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness").

The stage is set for contrast, then, when Jesus appears in 3:13 to be baptized. Unlike the Pharisees, who, John's scathing words imply, would obey in a formal manner without wholehearted devotion, Jesus goes the extra mile, as it were, in his obedience to John's divinely authorized preaching. That Jesus does not need to be baptized by John for repentance (3:14) actually serves to underscore the radical nature of his obedience: even though he himself need not repent or be baptized, Jesus states, "Let it be so now, for it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (ἄφες ἄρτι, οὕτως γὰρ πρέπον ἐστὶν ἡμῖν πληρῶσαι πάσαν δικαιοσύνην, 3:15). One might say that Jesus here performs a work of

supererogation in submitting to the will of God by submitting to John's divinely authorized baptism.

The phrase πληρῶσαι πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην is considered "programmatic" by most commentators, but the precise nature of that program remains unclear. Hans-Christian Kammler asserts that "righteousness" here concerns justification secured by Jesus' readiness to do the will of his Father in going to his sacrificial death, but, likely owing to Pauline assumptions, he reads the term against the sense of its usage elsewhere in Matthew (as he admits).⁴⁰ Noting that πληρῶω in the Gospel of Matthew usually concerns the fulfillment of Scripture, Davies and Allison assert that fulfilling prophecy involves fulfilling righteousness: "Because prophecy declares God's will, to fulfill prophecy is to fulfill righteousness."⁴¹ They tie this to the heavenly voice of 3:17: "The voice from heaven, drawing upon Ps 2.7 and Isa 42.1, makes plain that the baptism of Jesus brings to realization scriptural hopes. So when Jesus fulfils all righteousness, he is fulfilling Scripture."⁴² Although the linking of Scripture and righteousness is plausible, the difficulty is that it is "righteousness" that is explicitly being fulfilled.

In the course of reading the Gospel, the Matthean Model Reader will discover that the best solution is to see "righteousness" here in its standard usage in the Gospel, encompassing all aspects of the divine will. As revealed in John's ministry, the divine will requires repentance and baptism and thus Jesus is baptized, therefore fulfilling all righteousness. He leaves no stone unturned, as it were. But "to fulfill all righteousness" looks forward as well. Throughout the Gospel, Jesus is the one who in word and deed fulfills righteousness, while his enemies do not; they are unjust hypocrites (Matt 21:32; 23:28; 23:27–28) who will conspire to kill him (12:14; 26:3–5). Their hypocrisy and murderous hostility vis-à-vis the righteous is seen in a most robust fashion in 23:29–35, and it is in light of this passage that the πληρῶω of Matt 3:15 should be read. The scribes and Pharisees are "hypocrites" who "build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the

⁴⁰ Hans-Christian Kammler, "Sohn Gottes und Kreuz: die Versuchungsgeschichte Mt 4,1–11 im Kontext des Matthäusevangeliums," *ZThK* 100 (2003): 171–76. On the concept of "righteousness" in the Gospel of Matthew, see Benno Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought* (SNTSMS 41; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

⁴¹ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 1:327.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 1:326.

righteous" (23:29). Their self-distancing from the wicked deeds of their fathers (v. 30) actually bears witness against them, in that they thus confess they are their murderous fathers' sons (v. 31). Jesus then says, "Fill up, then, the measure of your Fathers" (καὶ ὑμεῖς πληρώσατε τὸ μέτρον τῶν πατέρων ὑμῶν, v. 32), which involves killing, crucifying, flogging, and persecuting prophets, wise men, and scribes (v. 34); they will thus be responsible for "all the righteous blood shed upon the earth" (πᾶν αἷμα δίκαιον ἐκχυννόμενον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, v. 35) from Abel to Zechariah. In the midst of this tirade, Jesus uses language echoing John's denunciation of the Pharisees and Sadducees in 3:7–12: "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?" (v. 33). Thus, at the baptism and in this passage we have the language of righteousness, fulfillment, and "brood of vipers," as well as a contrast between Jesus and certain Jewish parties.

Therefore, whereas Jesus will fulfill all righteousness in truly doing the divine will throughout his ministry, his enemies will "fulfill the measure of their fathers," ultimately killing Jesus as they did many of the righteous before him. In the course of reading further the Model Reader will discover that Jesus' fulfilling of all righteousness at the baptism involves doing the total will of God and will result in his death, the unrighteous fruit of a human conspiracy. The death of Jesus in the Gospel, however, is also the result of divine necessity (Matt 16:21), a death which will be for salvation (26:28). Davies and Allison are correct in emphasizing the role of Scripture at the baptism, but, on verbal grounds, the scripture in view is most likely Gen 22. This would produce two parallels. First, hearing echoes of the Akedah produced by the allusion in 3:17 would indicate Jesus' death is a divinely ordained sacrifice, complementing the emphasis on Jesus' death as a result of his enemies' hostility, as foreshadowed in the entire baptism scene, particularly 3:15. Second, the general sequence of 3:13–17 would match that of the Gospel: Jesus' righteousness (3:15) is followed by death (3:17). This is ultimately where Jesus' wholehearted obedience to the righteous will of God will lead.

Jesus' baptism of "repentance," then, is not a total turning around, but rather a turning to, as he obediently begins to undertake his divinely appointed mission. It is significant that Jesus' divine sonship finds mention in direct conjunction with Jesus' obedience. Noting the general lack of explicit mention of Jesus' divine sonship in chapters 1–2, Luz notes,

Das wichtigste ist, daß von V 14f her die *Gottessohnschaft* Jesu einen neuen, für Matthäus bezeichnenden Akzent gewinnt. Der Gottessohn ist für ihn nicht nur der vom Himmel her Offenbarte... sondern vor allem der Gehorsame und sich Gottes Willen Unterstellende... Jetzt wird auch verständlich, warum Matthäus in den ersten beiden Kapiteln zwar immer wieder den Gottessohntitel anklingen ließ, dies aber dennoch nur zurückhaltend und andeutend tat: Erst in unserer Perikope wird klar, was dieses »Signal« eigentlich meinte. [...] Ganz bewußt stellt also Matthäus da Verhalten Jesu an den Anfang seines Evangeliums. Jesus ist der Gehorsam und Demütige. Eben auf diesen Gehorsam Jesu antwortet Gott mit seiner Proklamation: »Dieser ist mein geliebter Sohn«. ⁴³

Jesus' sonship is thus intrinsically tied to his obedience. The concept of Jesus' obedience contained in the co-text of the baptism therefore provides general thematic coherence with the obedience of the Isaac of the Akedah.

Further, John's words of caution regarding Abrahamic sonship may be of import and provide a point of contrast: whereas the Pharisees and Sadducees presume Abrahamic sonship (3:9) but are disobedient (3:7–8), Jesus is presented by the heavenly voice as the beloved Son, implying to the Model Reader that he will be the obedient Son of Abraham, like the Isaac of the Akedah of the Jewish encyclopedia with which the Model Reader is familiar. The themes of threat and obedience continue in the co-text of the testing narrative, to which the baptism is tightly tied.⁴⁴ Moreover, there are specific indications that will lead the Model Reader to later see in the testing narrative intimations of Jesus' sacrifice, thus suggesting that the Akedah is in view in 3:17.

⁴³ Luz, *Matthäus*, 1:215; see also idem, *Theology*, 35–36.

⁴⁴ See Luz, *Theology*, 35–36; Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1985), 26–30; and Kammler, "Sohn Gottes und Kreuz," 170. Immediately after the sounding of the heavenly voice in Matt 3:17, the Gospel of Matthew states, "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil (Τότε ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀνήχθη εἰς τὴν ἔρημον ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος πειρασθῆναι ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου)" (4:1). The sudden τότε functions to connect 4:1 with 3:17 as the hinge of a "diptych" (Kammler, "Sohn Gottes und Kreuz," 170). In addition, 3:13 and 4:1 contain parallel constructions: the sentences begin with the common temporal adverb τότε, have Jesus as subject, and close with an infinitive clause of purpose: τότε παραγίνεται ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰορδάνην πρὸς τὸν Ἰωάννην τοῦ βαπτισθῆναι ὑπ' αὐτοῦ (3:13); τότε ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀνήχθη εἰς τὴν ἔρημον ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος πειρασθῆναι ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου (4:1). Further, Jesus as God's beloved Son (3:17) will be tested as "son of God" (4:3, 6), and the same Spirit who descended upon Jesus in 3:16 now leads Jesus forth for testing in the desert. Finally, both sections end with a sentence concerning the heavens and the phrase καὶ ἰδοὺ (3:17; 4:11).

7.2.2 *The Testing Narrative: Obedience and Cross*

Jesus has been presented as the embodiment of Israel (2:15) and Jesus has received God's approbation in response to his obedience (3:17). The testing narrative concerns the testing of Jesus as both the embodiment of Israel and beloved Son. As pertains to Jesus as the embodiment of Israel, there is some question, however, as to whether Jesus will be faithful, for Israel's history contains instances of gross failure and disobedience by corporate Israel and otherwise heroic individuals therein.⁴⁵ In Hos 11 itself the Model Reader finds the disobedience of Israel recounted. The Gospel has shown Jesus to be the embodiment of Israel. The question presents itself: will Jesus, the embodiment of Israel, be faithful? The allusive identification of Jesus as the beloved Son suggests so, if the Model Reader perceives echoes of Isaac, who also was a singular embodiment of Israel and who also in the tradition proved faithful and obedient. Conversely, Jesus' obedience in the testing narrative would help confirm the Model Reader's hypothesis that aspects of the intertextual frame of the Akedah are in view in 3:17. Will this beloved Son, embodying Israel, be faithful?

The testing narrative (Matt 4:1–11) answers this question affirmatively and definitively.⁴⁶ Jesus is tested (Matt 4:1); Israel was tested in the wilderness (Deut 8:2). Jesus is in the desert forty days and nights (Matt 4:1); Israel was in the wilderness forty years (Deut 8:2). Jesus is hungry (Matt 4:1); Israel was hungry (Deut 8:3). In this brief story there are three quotations from Deuteronomy (Deut 8:3 in Matt 4:4; Deut 6:16 in Matt 4:7; Deut 6:13 in Matt 4:10). In this section of Deuteronomy (MT or LXX) Israel is repeatedly adjured to be faithful to the LORD in light of the exodus and the giving of the Commandments (Deut 5). As such, "we have before us a haggadic tale which has issued forth from reflection on Deut 6–8. Jesus, the Son of God, is repeating the

⁴⁵ It is often noted that the genealogy itself indicates this. See Alkier, "Zeichen der Erinnerung—Die Genealogie in Mt 1 als intertextuelle Disposition," in *Bekenntnis und Erinnerung: Festschrift zum 75. Geburtstag von Hans-Friedrich Weiß* (ed. Klaus-Michael Bull and Eckart Reinmuth; Rostocker Theologische Studien 16; Münster: Lit Verlag, 2004), 108–28, for an insightful treatment of its intertextual dynamics.

⁴⁶ On this, see Gerhardsson, *The Testing of God's Son (Matt 4:1–11 & Par): An Analysis of an Early Christian Midrash* (CBNT 2; Lund: Gleerup, 1966), who argues that this episode is similar to rabbinic exposition of the Shema. The pertinent rabbinic texts are *m. Ber.* 9:5 and *Sipre Deut.* 6:5.

experience of Israel in the desert.”⁴⁷ Jesus obeys perfectly, unlike Israel in the wilderness.⁴⁸ It is also important to note that in Deuteronomy it is God who tests the Israelites whereas in the Gospel of Matthew it is the devil who tests Jesus. Shifting the responsibility for testing and trial from God to a satanic figure is a common dualistic characteristic of apocalyptic literature. As we have seen in *Jubilees*, for example, Gen 22 is rewritten in terms of the book of Job: it is Mastema, Prince of the satanic forces, who challenges God to command Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.

The story of the testing of Jesus, therefore, concerns more than generic obedience and Jesus as beloved Son of God concerns more than his role as a sort of new Israel. The three particular scenes of testing concern Jesus’ filial obedience and contain hints of the passion, both of which suggest to the Model Reader that echoes of the Akedah are to be heard in 3:17. Each of the tests concerns not simply brute, generic obedience. One finds a conceptual thread running through all three tests, namely the theme of the power and authority which rightly belongs to Jesus as Son of God, implied in the concept of sonship itself and confirmed later for the Model Reader in many instances in the Gospel of Matthew (e.g., 7:29; 8–9, esp. 8:5–13 and 9:1–8; 10:1; 21:23–27; 24:30; 24:64; and above all 26:16–20, to which the third test in 4:8–10 is tied).

Reading the *ei* of the devil’s words in the first two tests as “since” shows this up nicely. In the first test, it is not a question of Jesus’ ability to turn stones to bread or whether he has the authority to do so, but rather whether he will use his power to do so. And so the devil in essence asks, “Since you are the Son of God, why not simply turn these stones to bread?” In and of itself, the suggestion appears innocent. Jesus has already fasted forty days and forty nights and was therefore hungry

⁴⁷ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 1:352. It is fitting, however, that one does not find material from Deut 7 in Matthew. For Deut 7 contains instruction to drive out the nations, a theme that hardly fits with the Matthean theme of Gentile inclusion. The Model Reader thus leaves Deut 7 narcotized.

⁴⁸ Noting the contrast, Tertullian writes, “... the Lord figuratively retorted upon Israel the reproach they had cast on the Lord. For the people, after crossing the sea, and being carried about in the desert during forty years, although they were there nourished with divine supplies, nevertheless were more mindful of their belly and their gullet than of God. Thereupon the Lord, driven apart unto desert places after baptism, showed, by maintaining a fast of forty days, that the man of God lives ‘not by bread alone,’ but ‘by the word of God,’ and that temptations incident to fullness or immoderation of appetite are shattered by abstinence” (*Bapt.* 20; trans. Thelwall, *ANF* 3:1274).

(4:2). It is not as if Jesus would be breaking off a fast early. Why not now eat? Moberly answers:

If Jesus is Son to God, then he is in a position to be a channel for divine power; and indeed in his ministry Jesus will exercise this power for others, both to feed and to heal. The question is whether he should exercise this power for himself, even to meet a legitimate need of hunger. The danger in this is that as soon as the divine power is used for himself, then it may become a means to his own ends. A relationship of mutuality and trust could be reduced, albeit subtly, to a means of self-gratification.⁴⁹

The ties of this test to the Passion Narrative show the Model Reader that sonship concerns not only passive self-denial, as Moberly notes, but also active self-sacrifice. In Matt 27:40b those who mock Jesus do so employing the same words of the devil in 4:3: "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross (εἰ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ κατάβηθι ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ; 4:3: εἰ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ...)." Kammler writes, "Wenn Matthäus beide Texte zueinander in Beziehung setzt, so bringt er damit theologisch zum Ausdruck, daß Jesus seine göttliche Macht grundsätzlich nicht zur Selbsthilfe verwendet[.]"⁵⁰ Jesus' scriptural response, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Deut 8:3; Matt 4:4), emphasizes his absolute filial piety. Further, that he refuses to eat here may strike the Model Reader as a second instance of supererogation, like that of his baptism at the hands of John. Jesus is hungry explicitly after (ἵστανον) fasting forty days and forty nights, but he refuses any suggestion of the devil, however licit it may otherwise be.

If the first test concerns Jesus' own power, the second concerns God's. The devil's challenge is adroit; he cites Ps 90:11–12 LXX: "‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone’" (Matt 4:6; significantly omitting "to guard you in all your ways" [τοῦ διαφυλάξαι σε ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς σου] from v. 11b). Moberly writes, "If Jesus appeals to the word of God in scripture as the basis for not using divine power for himself, what then should he make of those passages in scripture which promise God's protection to those who trust in God?"⁵¹ The challenge is very subtle, as the devil is telling the truth using

⁴⁹ Moberly, *Bible, Theology, and Faith*, 201.

⁵⁰ Kammler, "Sohn Gottes und Kreuz," 178.

⁵¹ Moberly, *Bible, Theology, and Faith*, 202.

Ps 90:11–12: God promises such protection. Jesus' response from Deut 6:16, that one should not put the Lord God to the test, demonstrates Jesus' fundamental attitude of loyalty, trust, and obedience. Moberly observes, "An act of trying to force God to keep his promise would, by its very nature, not be an act of trust; it would be, in the terminology of the text, an act of testing."⁵²

The omission of τοῦ διαφυλάξαι σε ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς σου from Ps 90:11b in the devil's citation is significant in that it is one of three ways this second test presages the cross. It is "on the way" (ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ) to Jerusalem that Jesus delivers a passion prediction (20:17–19); the omission of the all-encompassing phrase suggests to the Model Reader that there may in fact be certain situations in which God will not guard Jesus, a suspicion perhaps confirmed in 20:17–19. Further, the protection of angels guaranteed in the Psalm and refused by Jesus in the testing is refused again by Jesus in 26:53 at his arrest: "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" Finally, the citation of Ps 22:9 in Matt 27:43 emphasizes Jesus' obedient sonship and is tied verbally and conceptually to the second scene of testing: "He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

The third test involves Jesus' foreswearing for the time being that which he will later receive. Luz observes:

He who, on the mountain, rejected the devil's offer of world domination (4:8–10) and chose the path of obedience, will for this very reason, again on a mountain, be granted all the power in heaven and on earth at the end of his chosen path of obedience (28:16–20).⁵³

The texts are thus linked both verbally and conceptually. The devil is offering that to which Jesus is entitled as God's Son. The devil offers a shortcut, however. Obtaining his inheritance before the appointed time is predicated upon Jesus' worship of the devil: "What confronts Jesus is the prospect of trying to obtain the glory that is indeed promised by God by means of compromising his loyalty to God."⁵⁴ Jesus' response, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve'" (Matt 4:10; Deut 6:13) emphasizes Jesus' obedience not merely to scriptural prerogatives in a general sense but to

⁵² Ibid., 203.

⁵³ Luz, *Theology*, 37.

⁵⁴ Moberly, *Bible, Theology, and Faith*, 204.

God his Father in particular, for the Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus and God in the closest of relationships (1:23; 11:27; 28:19). The Model Reader will later discover that Jesus' filial loyalty here involves obedience unto death; Jesus' words ὑπάγε σατανᾶ in Matt 4:10a are precisely those with which he rebukes Peter following Peter's refusal to accept Jesus' passion prediction in 16:21–23: ὑπάγε...σατανᾶ! Kammler argues that this makes clear that "das Angebot der Weltherrschaft nichts anderes bedeutet als die Forderung des Neins zur Passion und zum Kreuz."⁵⁵

Thus, the knowledge which the Model Reader will later receive in the course of the narrative reveals that the testing narrative stands under the shadow of the cross. Not only will the general concept of Jesus' obedience as shown in 3:13–4:11 lead the Model Reader to suspect that the Akedah is in play but also the specifics detailed here which point to Jesus' sacrificial death.

But there is more. The testing narrative itself provides the Model Reader with reason to actualize that aspect of the Akedah which concerns sacrificial death, for hearing the Akedah in the baptismal voice explains why Jesus must refuse to do those three otherwise legitimate things the devil suggests he do. The Model Reader knows that Jesus is the Christ (1:1, 16, 17, 18; 2:4)⁵⁶ and rightly suspects that divine sonship (3:17) involves privileges. In each scene of testing, the devil suggests that Jesus take that to which he is entitled: bread after a completed period of fasting; protection from danger provided by his Father's angels; dominion and authority. It is not that these things are wrong in and of themselves in an absolute sense for the Son of God, but they are wrong here, now. Gratification must be delayed. Why? The only thing in 3:13–4:11 which could provide an answer would be the perception

⁵⁵ Kammler, "Sohn Gottes und Kreuz," 180.

⁵⁶ Thus it is not necessary to see a reference to Ps 2:7 in Matt 3:17 for the testing narrative to concern Jesus' testing as Messiah. The narrative, however, concerns not in the first instance Jesus' Messiahship but his sonship. Advocating caution about Messianic readings of the narrative, Moberly writes: "First, the nature of the specific tests which Jesus faces are sometimes skewed by being too readily assimilated to assumptions about what the testing of a messianic vocation would be likely to involve. Secondly, although there are clear messianic overtones in the royal imagery of the infancy narrative, subsequent to the infancy narrative the specific issue of Jesus as 'the Christ' is not introduced until later [11:2–6; 16:13–20] [...] The issue of Jesus' sonship in the testing may be in some sense a prior issue, not only in narrative sequence but even in intrinsic significance, to that of messiahship...It is the construal of sonship to God, rather than messiahship as such (inseparable though these ultimately are), that is the concern of the testing story" (*Bible, Theology, and Faith*, 200–1).

of echoes of the Akedah in the heavenly voice at the baptism. Jesus' refusal of that which is legitimate requires a reason. If the Model Reader actualizes ominous echoes of the Akedah in 3:17, then Jesus' refusal in the temptation narrative of that to which he is otherwise entitled makes good sense. Filial obedience must run its course to sacrificial death. The taking of his rule and prerogatives at this point would be particularly inappropriate—another reason why hearing Ps. 2:7 in the heavenly voice is problematic.

Further, in terms of function, hearing echoes of the Akedah in the heavenly voice makes sense in that it solves the narrative riddle concerning whence Jesus received the knowledge that "he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised" (16:21; cf. 17:12, 22–23; 20:17–19; 26:1–2). Moberly writes,

The costly nature of Jesus' obedience to God as God's Son has already been made clear not only in the testing (4:1–11) but also in Jesus' transformation of widespread rejection into a matter of thanksgiving and opportunity (11:25–30). But now it is stipulated that Jesus' discernment of his Father's will ('it is necessary', *dei*) means death in Jerusalem. The question of how Jesus knows this is not raised.⁵⁷

It is not raised explicitly by the text, but it has been raised by interpreters throughout the ages, which suggests that the text may implicitly suggest it. The Matthean text does indeed provide an answer, if subtle: the Matthean Jesus knows he must die in Jerusalem because he hears echoes of the Akedah in the heavenly voice of the baptism, and thus, like Isaac, he is to face sacrificial death at the hands of his Father at the general location of the temple. By alluding to the Akedah, the heavenly voice provides the figure of Jesus with the particulars of his divine commission.

Perhaps the Model Reader does not absolutely need to know from where Jesus received the details of the ultimate end of his mission. That Jesus' death is a divine necessity is introduced somewhat abruptly into the Matthean narrative, however, if the Model Reader has had no preparation.⁵⁸ Throughout the narrative, there are intimations of threat which imply that Jesus may die, and clues that Jesus' death is a

⁵⁷ Ibid., 210.

⁵⁸ Matt 1:21 need not imply the necessity of death, although 26:28 will clarify that "forgiveness of sins" involves the shedding of blood.

human necessity (e.g., 4:12, 12:14). But where are the intimations that Jesus' death is a divine necessity? Where does Jesus receive the details of his sacrificial commission in the narrative? Hearing the Akedah in the baptismal voice of Matt 3:17 answers these questions. In hearing the divine declaration that Jesus is the beloved Son, the Matthean Jesus and the Model Reader realize Jesus' mission involves sacrificial death.⁵⁹ The Model Reader is then not surprised by Jesus' explicit declaration thereof in 16:21. Echoes of the Akedah at the baptism function to give Jesus his divine sacrificial commission and indicate to the Model Reader what divine sonship involves and the ultimate limits which Jesus the beloved Son is called to obey. The proclamation of Jesus' divine sonship involves, in the first instance, not his declaration as Messiah (as if Ps 2:7 were in play) but his role as the beloved Son, who will go willingly and obediently to his sacrificial death.

7.2.3 *Sacrifice and Soteriology*

Having raised the issue of sacrifice, the relevance of the testing narrative for the shape of Matthean soteriology must be noted. In one sense, Jesus' achievement in the wilderness is defensive: he survives the satanic challenge without succumbing to temptation and thus shows himself faithful. The attacker must vanquish, but the defender need merely survive, and Jesus has emerged spiritually unscathed. In another sense, however, Jesus' achievement in the wilderness is offensive. In this passage Jesus has defeated the devil, and done so as the coming "stronger one" (ἰσχυρότερος; 3:11). Each of the tests with which the devil confronts Jesus is an attempt to separate Jesus from his Father and his commission.⁶⁰ Yet Jesus holds fast and so is victorious over the devil's scheme: "The defeat of the devil in the wilderness may also be... Jesus' first act of conquering the latter day 'Canaanites in the promised land' as true Israel," for Deut 6:18–19 records that had the Israelites not

⁵⁹ Levenson writes, "In light of the mounting importance of the aqedah in the Judaism of the Second Temple period, it is reasonable to suspect that the early audiences of the synoptic Gospels connected the belovedness of Jesus with his Passion and crucifixion. Jesus' gory death was not a negation of God's love (the Gospel was proclaiming), but a manifestation of it, evidence that Jesus was the beloved son first prefigured in Isaac" (*Death and Resurrection*, 200). So too with Jesus, then, as a character in the Gospel of Matthew, and the Model Reader of the Gospel of Matthew.

⁶⁰ Kammler, "Sohn Gottes und Kreuz," 182–84.

succumbed to their temptations, they would have possessed the land by driving out their enemies.⁶¹

It is of no little import that Jesus and his followers perform exorcisms (7:22; 8:16; 8:28–9:1; 9:32–34; 10:8; 12:22–29; 15:22–28; 17:14–18). Most significant is 12:22–29, Jesus' exorcism of a deaf-mute which leads to conflict with the Pharisees and Jesus' words regarding divided kingdoms, Beelzebul, and the necessity of binding the strong man (πῶς δύναται τις εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν τοῦ ἰσχυροῦ καὶ τὰ σκεύη αὐτοῦ ἄρπάσαι, ἐὰν μὴ πρῶτον δῆσῃ τὸν ἰσχυρόν;). The Gospel of Matthew is thoroughly apocalyptic; it details a struggle between Jesus and Satan and his unwitting human minions, as seen in the links between Matt 3:1–4:11 and Matt 12.⁶² Matthean soteriology may therefore involve a Christus Victor model, something seldom discussed in Matthean studies.

Indeed, Jesus' very name evokes Joshua and thus echoes of conquest, for Ἰησοῦς is Greek for the Hebrew יהושע, Joshua, which was understood to be etymologically related to ישע, "to save," and ישועה,

⁶¹ Gregory K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (New Studies in Biblical Theology 17; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004), 172–73. Beale continues: "Consequently, Jesus' victory over temptation appears to have prepared him to conquer the one who was the ultimate satanic prince of the Canaanites and of all wicked nations and to conquer the land in a way that Israel had not been able to" (173).

⁶² Irenaeus notes this conflict in linking Jesus' testing with 12:22–29: "Thus then does the Lord plainly show that it was the true Lord and the one God who had been set forth by the law; for Him whom the law proclaimed as God, the same did Christ point out as the Father, whom also it behooves the disciples of Christ alone to serve. By means of the statements of the law, He put our adversary to utter confusion; and the law directs us to praise God the Creator, and to serve Him alone. Since this is the case, we must not seek for another Father besides Him, or above Him, since there is one God who justifies the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith. For if there were any other perfect Father above Him, He (Christ) would by no means have overthrown Satan by means of His words and commandments. For one ignorance cannot be done away with by means of another ignorance, any more than one defect by another defect. If, therefore, the law is due to ignorance and defect, how could the statements contained therein bring to naught the ignorance of the devil, and conquer the strong man? For a strong man can be conquered neither by an inferior nor by an equal, but by one possessed of greater power. But the Word of God is the superior above all, He who is loudly proclaimed in the law: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God;' and, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;' and, 'Him shall thou adore, and Him alone shall thou serve.' Then in the Gospel, casting down the apostasy by means of these expressions, He did both overcome the strong man by His Father's voice, and He acknowledges the commandment of the law to express His own sentiments, when He says, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' For He did not confound the adversary by the saying of any other, but by that belonging to His own Father, and thus overcame the strong man" (*Adv. Haer.* 5.22.1, trans. Rambaut, *ANF* 1:1138–39).

"salvation."⁶³ In the Greek versions of the Old Testament, Ἰησοῦς renders יהושע. In Matt 1:21, then, when the angel tells Joseph that he is to call his son Jesus, "for he will save (σώσει) his people from their sins," it can be assumed that the Model Reader is to understand the subtle, implicit etymological connection between the name Ἰησοῦς and his soteriological function, σώσει, for the text presents no explanation (compare Matt 1:23 on this point).⁶⁴ Philo remarks upon the change of Joshua's name from Αὐση to Ἰησοῦς (Num 13:16) and observes that the latter means "the salvation of the Lord" (Ἰησοῦς δὲ σωτηρία κυρίου, *Mut.* 121). In Sir 46:1, Joshua is described as a mighty victorious warrior and his name is linked with salvation:

Joshua son of Nun was mighty in war,
and was the successor of Moses in the prophetic office.
He became, as his name implies (κατὰ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ),
a great savior (μέγας ἐπὶ σωτηρία) of God's elect,
to take vengeance on the enemies that rose against them,
so that he might give Israel its inheritance.

Many early Christians, their Bibles in Greek, seized upon the etymological and typological possibilities afforded by the identity of the name of Ἰησοῦς son of Nave⁶⁵ and Ἰησοῦς Son of God.⁶⁶ Jerome writes,

I will pass to Joshua son of Nun, who was previously called *Ause*, or better, as in the Hebrew, *Osee*, that is, *Saviour*. For he, according to the epistle of Jude [5], saved the people of Israel and led them forth out of Egypt, and brought them into the land of promise.⁶⁷ (*Jov.* 1.21)

In the same vein, Lactantius writes,

For the prophet does not speak this way: "And the Lord said to me," but to *Jesus* [i.e., to Joshua in Josh 5:2], in order to show that he was

⁶³ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 1:209.

⁶⁴ If Matt 1:21 does in fact allude to Ps 129:8 LXX (καὶ αὐτὸς λυτρώσεται τὸν Ἰσραὴλ ἐκ πασῶν τῶν ἀνομιῶν αὐτοῦ), the Model Reader would note that the Model Author has gone out of the way to substitute σώσει for λυτρώσεται, thus revealing that the subsumed Jesus-salvation play was indeed deliberate; even if not, however, the text expects the Model Reader to pick up on the wordplay. See Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 1:210; Mayordomo-Marin, *Den Anfang hören*, 260–62; and Novakovic, *Messiah*, 63–69.

⁶⁵ "Nave" is the transliteration usually given in English translations for the Greek Ναυη, which is rendered "Nun" in English translations of the Hebrew נון.

⁶⁶ See John J. O'Keefe and R. R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2005), 73–78.

⁶⁷ Trans. Fremantle, *NPNF*² 6:361.

not speaking of himself but of Christ to whom God was then speaking. For that Jesus was figure of Christ. Although he was first called Osee, Moses, foreseeing the future, ordered him to be called Josue (or Jesus), so that, since he was selected leader of the soldiery against Amalec who was attacking the children of Israel, he might overcome the adversary through the figure of his name and lead the people into the land of promise.⁶⁸ (*Epit.* 4.17)

Chrysostom also draws the typology from the fact of the name change and observes that Jesus, not the Law, brings Christians to heaven like Joshua brought the Israelites into the land, not Moses (*Hom. Heb.* 27.6).⁶⁹

Justin Martyr identifies the captain who appeared to Joshua (Josh 5:13–15) with the preexistent *logos* himself (*Dial.* 61)⁷⁰ who is present when the Lord promises Joshua that Jericho will be given into his hand (Josh 6:2; *Dial.* 62). Justin also draws typological parallels between Moses' stretching out his arms while Joshua battled the Amalekites with the cross and Jesus' defeat of the powers:

Now this took place in the case of both those holy men and prophets of God, that you may perceive how one of them could not bear up both the mysteries: I mean, the type of the cross and the type of the name. For this is, was, and shall be the strength of Him alone, whose name every power dreads, being very much tormented because they shall be destroyed by Him.⁷¹ (*Dial.* 111)

Now it is clear that the memorial of Amalek remained after the son of Nave (Nun): but He makes it manifest through Jesus, who was crucified, of whom also those symbols were fore-announcements of all that would happen to Him, the demons would be destroyed, and would dread His name, and that all principalities and kingdoms would fear Him[.]⁷² (*Dial.* 131)

It is very much possible that this is the sort of soteriology the Gospel of Matthew would have its Model Reader grasp. Some commentators assert that Matthean soteriology is "religious and moral" and not "political,"⁷³

⁶⁸ Trans. Mary Francis McDonald, *Lactantius: The Divine Institutes: Books I–VII* [FC 49; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1964], 289).

⁶⁹ *NPNF*¹ 14:489.

⁷⁰ So too Origen, *Hom. Josh.* 6:2. Origen generally describes Jesus' victory in terms of his conquest of sin in Christian believers; see *Hom. Josh.* 11:6, 12:3, 13:2–4, 15:5, 15:7.

⁷¹ Trans. Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF* 1:254. Cf. also *Dial.* 90–91.

⁷² Trans. Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF* 1:265.

⁷³ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 1:210. They write: "Liberation removes the wall of sin between God and the human race; nothing is said about freedom from oppres-

while others argue the opposite.⁷⁴ Few, however, have seen the rich possibilities afforded by a Christus Victor model.

7.3 SUMMARY

Having covered much exegetical territory, it is time to review our findings. First, the simplest solution for the allusive riddle of Matt 3:17 is Gen 22:2, 11–12, and 15–16. These texts have much more verbal, syntactical correspondence with each other than Matt 3:17 does with either Ps 2:7 or Isa 42:1. There is no need to perform tradition-critical gymnastics involving highly speculative assumptions concerning the content of the empirical author's mind and the conclusion that the latter was significantly different from that which he actually wrote. The only portion of Matt 3:17 unexplained by Gen 22 is the final phrase ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα, which could indeed point to the Akedah, if Stegner is correct, or allude to 2 Sam 22:20 (found in David's song of thanksgiving) or Jer 2:19, 14:10 (in which God is not pleased with Israel), or 14:12. If it were to happen to allude to Isa 42:1, this need not indicate that the whole anachronistic metaconcept of the "Suffering Servant" is in view, for reasons which we will shortly examine. In light of the shape of Matt 12:17–21 and the concerns of the co-text, it may simply indicate that Isa 42:1–4 is in view, that the death of Jesus the beloved Son will in some way precipitate the mission to the Gentiles. Second, the concerns of the co-text, obedience and threat, confirm that Matt 3:17 alludes in some way to Gen 22 and produces certain echoes of the Akedah.

If all this is correct, we may indeed have the beginnings of a significant narrative typology: the Matthean story of God and Jesus may parallel the story of Abraham and Isaac, thus revisioning God in the image of Abraham.⁷⁵ As Irenaeus noted long ago:

sion of the governing powers (contrast *Ps. Sol.* 17). Beyond this, however, our verse is not very illuminating with regard to exactly how Jesus saves... Perhaps, then, Matthew thought that Jesus saved his people from their sins in a variety of ways."

⁷⁴ Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* (Word Biblical Commentary 33a; Dallas: Word, 1993), 19; Carter, "To save his people from their sins' (Matt 1:21): Rome's Empire and Matthew's Salvation as Sovereignty," in *SBL Seminar Papers, 2000* (SBLSP 39; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 379–40.

⁷⁵ The phrase is from the title of ch. 16 of Levenson's *Death and Resurrection*, "The Revisioning of God in the Image of Abraham."

For Abraham, according to his faith, followed the command of the Word of God, and with a ready mind delivered up, as a sacrifice to God, his only-begotten and beloved son, in order that God also might be pleased to offer up for all his seed His own beloved and only-begotten Son, as a sacrifice for our redemption.⁷⁶

This is not so far removed from what an earlier Christian theologian had said: “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?” (Rom 8:32).⁷⁷ As we saw in a prior chapter, many early Christians were finding and exploiting similar parallels.

Davies and Allison, representative of most modern commentators, deny that the Matthean Jesus faces a sacrificial death in obedience like the Isaac of the rewritten Akedah; instead, they maintain that Jesus’ “sonship largely consists in choosing to take up the ministry of the suffering servant.”⁷⁸ But this seems an exaggerated conclusion to base on the short phrase ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα, which, as noted, simply does not match Isa 42:1 in the LXX, the MT, or Matt 12:18. One wonders why most commentators are unwilling to entertain examining the evidence for a role for Isaac and the Akedah here in the baptism and in other loci, especially since they enthusiastically associate so many other Matthean Christological appellations with the rubric “Son of God.”⁷⁹

⁷⁶ *Adv. Haer.* 4.5.4b, trans. Rambaut, *ANF* 1:467.

⁷⁷ As we have seen, Chrysostom also makes the connection between Gen 22, Rom 8:32 and the Matthean baptism. Levenson writes, “The prominence of the love of God in Rom 8:28–39 alone suffices to arouse our suspicion of an allusion to the tradition of Abraham and, in particular, the ultimate test of his love, the binding of Isaac for immolation on the altar. The suspicion is abundantly confirmed in v 32. ‘He who did not spare his own Son’ is a transparent reworking of the angel’s words to Abraham at the end of the aqedah: ‘since you have not withheld your son, your favored one, from Me’ and ‘because you have done this and not withheld your son, your favored one’ (Gen 22:12, 16). Paul’s ‘spare’ is the same Greek verb as the Septuagint uses for ‘withheld’ in these two verses (*pheidomai*). His point is reminiscent of Gal 3:13–14 but far more explicit: the new aqedah, which is the crucifixion of Jesus, has definitively and irreversibly secured the blessings of which the angel there spoke” (*Death and Resurrection*, 222). See also Nils Alstrup Dahl, “The Atonement—an Adequate Reward for the Akedah (Ro 8:32)?” in *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christian Doctrine* (ed. Donald Juel; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 137–51. Dahl thought that the verse reflected interpretations of the Akedah prevalent in Jewish-Christian circles, but that Paul’s point concerned not vicarious atonement *per se* but rather act and reward.

⁷⁸ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 1:344.

⁷⁹ Davies and Allison write, “For Matthew, ‘Son (of God)’ is a key Christological title... This is not to say, as Kingsbury has said, that all the other Christological titles are to be subsumed under this one. Rather it is closer to the truth to say that other major appellations—Messiah, Son of David, Son of Man, Servant, Lord—and their

The answer is that the figure of the Suffering Servant has proven simply so powerful and dominant in modern scholarship that Isaac remains obscured in its massive shadow. Seeing a reference to Isaac here in the baptism is a much more certain proposition on the cold merits of the case, but the concept of the Suffering Servant has been so prominent in Matthean scholarship that any potential relevance of Isaac and the Akedah is routinely ignored and discounted.

Without having gone into great detail regarding issues surrounding the existence and function of the Servant in the encyclopedia of early Judaism and in the Gospel of Matthew, I have to this point merely suggested that the possibility that the particular shape of the Matthean text at Matt 3:17 would lead the Model Reader to perceive an allusion to Isa 42:1 is weak. It is now time, however, to examine the concept of the Servant and its potential role for the Gospel of Matthew in detail, especially since the Gospel does indeed contain explicit citations of versions of material from the so-called Servant Songs in two loci (Isa 53:4 in Matt 8:17; Isa 42:1 in Matt 12:18–21) and since the next appearance of ἀγαπητός occurs within the latter.

attendant themes, taken along with the story in 1.18–23 and Jesus' words and deeds, give content to 'Son of God'. The title also receives meaning from the Jesus/Israel typology found in chapter 1–5 [*sic*]. And that is not all. It would be a mistake—one which Kingsbury has made—to restrict our eyes to the Gospel of Matthew. 'Son of God' was a very pregnant title with various associations in Judaism and in the ancient world in general. Should we not think that to some extent all of these associations, in so far as they were known to Matthew and thought of by him in a positive fashion, were considered by the evangelist to have been fulfilled or brought to perfection in the person of Jesus?" (ibid., 1:339–40).

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE SUFFERING SERVANT AND MATTHEAN CHRISTOLOGY

8.1 QUESTIONING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT

The concept of the “Suffering Servant” remains a staple of New Testament scholarship.¹ Although a few scholars have argued that the putative Servant figure plays no substantive role in New Testament Christology,² rumors of the Servant’s demise have been greatly exaggerated. As we have seen, many interpreters consider the Servant figure essential for understanding Matthean Christology. Davies and Allison represent the views of many when they assert that the Matthean author “desire[s] to interpret Jesus with the christological category of servant,”³ that “‘servant’ is... a comprehensive title” for the Matthean Jesus, which “covers Jesus’ entire ministry, all that Jesus says and does (cf. 8.17).”⁴

The “Suffering Servant” as defined by modern scholarship, however, was not a meaningful category within the ancient Jewish encyclopedia within which the Gospel of Matthew operates, and neither does the Gospel coin the concept *de novo*. Isaianic citations in the Matthean narrative have a different function, and commonly accepted allusions to

¹ Bernard Duhm first identified the four “Servant Songs” (Isa 42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–10; 52:13–53:12) in 1892. See idem, *Das Buch Jesaia* (4th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1922). The classic and most influential presentation of the Servant’s relevance for New Testament studies is that of Jeremias, “παῖς θεοῦ,” *TWNT* 5:653–713 (= *TDNT* 5:654–717).

² See Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant: The Influence of the Servant Concept of Deutero-Isaiah in the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1959); idem, “Did the Use of Isaiah 53 to Interpret his Mission Begin with Jesus?” in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins* (ed. W. H. Bellinger and William R. Farmer; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1998), 88–103; idem, “Response to Mikael Parsons,” in Bellinger and Farmer, *Jesus and the Suffering Servant*, 120–24; Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, 119–33; and Huizenga, “The Incarnation of the Servant: Matthean Christology and the Suffering Servant,” *HBT* 27 (2005): 25–58.

³ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:239. See also David Hill, “Son and Servant: An Essay on Matthean Christology,” *JSNT* 6 (1980): 2–16; and idem, “The Figure of Jesus in Matthew’s Story: A Response to Professor Kingsbury’s Literary-Critical Probe,” *JSNT* 21 (1984): 37–52.

⁴ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:325.

Isaianic material are tenuous at best. Rather, the Servant figure has come into being through centuries of biblical interpretation and emerged most fully and well-defined in the modern period. Modern interpreters have thus read a discrete, well-defined Servant figure back into the Gospel of Matthew, inadvertently performing a largely Protestant canonical reading of the Gospel while attempting to do historical-critical exegesis, for only on the level of creative, canonical interpretation might the category of the Suffering Servant fruitfully describe the Matthean Jesus. Only within the dictionary of the MT version of Isaiah can the figure of the Suffering Servant possibly be found. Greek and Aramaic versions of Isaiah present a radically different version of the Servant Songs and “second” Isaiah in general, and no well-delineated Servant figure is found in extracanonical literature.

In what follows, I shall establish that no substantive, unified Servant figure was present in the encyclopedia, demonstrate that the citations of Isaianic Servant material in the Gospel of Matthew have functions other than presenting Jesus as the Suffering Servant, and raise questions about the plausibility and import of commonly accepted Matthean allusions to Servant material. I shall then explain the function of ὁ ἀγαπητός μου in Matt 12:18 as another likely echo of Gen 22.

8.2 THE DEARTH OF THE SERVANT IN THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF EARLY JUDAISM

All available evidence shows that the Suffering Servant as understood by modern scholars did not exist in the Jewish encyclopedia pertinent to the study of early Christianity. Material from and allusions to the so-called Servant Songs are indeed to be found; the question concerns significance. Was some sort of discrete Isaianic Servant figure available for appropriation and appreciation? Do extrabiblical Jewish texts or Jewish Bibles give evidence for the common currency of a discernible Servant figure?

8.2.1 *Literature apart from Isaiah*

Extrabiblical Jewish literature prior to or contemporaneous with the production of the New Testament evinces no discrete Servant figure.⁵

⁵ For treatments of the extrabiblical literature in greater detail, see Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, 119–33, and Sydney H. T. Page, “The Suffering Servant between the

One searches in vain for the intersection of an anticipated Messianic deliverer, his vicarious suffering and Isaianic Servant material, although modern scholars interested in the subject have generally assumed these elements to be constitutive of the Servant figure.⁶ Vague allusions to Servant material may be presented by Sir 11:12–13 and Wis 2:12–13, but both describe a generic figure. Neither vicarious suffering nor messianism is present. The Similitudes of Enoch may envision a coming deliverer figure (“son of man”; cf. *1 Enoch* 47:1–4) and some language sounds vaguely Isaianic; one finds, however, no vicarious suffering. Further, even if the Similitudes presented a Servant figure, much therein is likely post-Christian. In 2 Esdras/4 Ezra we encounter a dying Messiah (cf. 7:28–29), but Second Isaiah is not in view, the death of this Messiah is in no way vicarious, and he is not vindicated but remains dead. Second Isaiah, vicarious suffering, and messianism are not found together. These, however, should in some way coincide somewhere if a Servant figure as defined by modern scholarship lies behind certain expressions of New Testament Christology. Slight allusions to Isaianic material, such as one finds in the Psalms of Solomon,

Testaments,” *NTS* 31 (1985): 481–97; see also Samuel Rolles Driver and Adolf Neubauer, eds., *The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah according to the Jewish Interpreters* (Oxford: J. Parker, 1876–77; repr., New York: Ktav, 1969).

⁶ See Jeremias, “παῖς θεοῦ.” See also Martin Hengel, “Zur Wirkungsgeschichte von Jes 53 in vorchristlicher Zeit,” in *Der leidende Gottesknecht: Jesaja 53 und seine Wirkungsgeschichte* (ed. Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher; FAT 14; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 49–91 (ET: *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004]; a version of Hengel’s essay is found on pp. 75–146). Hengel admits the complexity of the issue in ancient Jewish literature and that the concept of vicarious atonement is often lacking, but concludes, “Dennoch halte ich die Vermutung für nicht völlig unbegründet, daß es schon in vorchristlicher Zeit Traditionen über leidende und sühnende eschatologisch-messianische Gestalten im palästinischen Judentum (und wohl auch in der Diaspora, beides kann man nicht streng getrennen) gegeben hat und daß Jesus und die Urgemeinde u. U. solche Traditionen kennen und daran anknüpfen konnten. Dies würde erklären, daß wohl schon Jesus selbst und dann seine Jünger nach Ostern voraussetzen konnten, daß die Botschaft vom stellvertretenden Sühnetod des Messias (1 Kor 15,3f) unter ihren jüdischen Volksgenossen verstanden würde” (91; emphasis original). Beaton is another who links the Servant and messianism. He argues that “the text [Isa 42:1–4] appears to have been read messianically before Christianity’s advent,” but in a note admits that “the direct evidence that Isa. 42:1–4 was read messianically in pre-Christian Judaism is slight” (“Messiah and Justice: A Key to Matthew’s Use of Isaiah 42,1–4?” *JSNT* 75 [1999]: 7 n. 8). He suggests that *Pss. Sol.* (17:28, 31, 35) and *1 Enoch* (39:6, 40:5, 48:4) may contain allusions to Servant material. He also concedes that critical editions of *Tg. Isa.* no longer contain the reading משיח (although Chilton includes it). He finally asserts simply that 1QIsa^a is marked to be read as a unit, and that the rabbinic text *Midr. Ps.* 43:3 reads Isa 42:1–4 messianically.

do not prove the existence of a significant Servant figure in the cultural encyclopedia of early Judaism. If there were a well-known Servant concept with widespread cultural currency, such slight allusions could evoke the entire metaconcept. Yet one finds no evidence of a discrete Servant figure in extrabiblical Jewish texts; we have nothing comparable to the extant legends pertaining to figures such as Abraham, Moses, or, for our present purposes, Isaac.

8.2.2 *Isaiah: MT, LXX, Targum*

The Servant figure is also lacking in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic Bibles. I shall first discuss servant language in MT Isaiah before turning to Greek and Aramaic versions.⁷

MT Isaiah

The ancients did not consider Isaiah a bi- or tripartite work. Thus, the identities of various “servants” in material outside the Servant Songs, including what we moderns term “first” Isaiah, could have conditioned the understanding of the supposed Servant in the Servant Songs.⁸ The Servant (עבדי) of Isa 20:3 is specifically Isaiah himself. Eliakim son of Hilkiyah is called “my servant” in Isa 22:20. In Isa 37:35, the LORD declares that Jerusalem will be spared in part for the sake of “my servant David.” Israel/Jacob is specifically identified as “my servant” in Isa 41:8–9, part of our modern Second Isaiah but not part of any Servant Song:

But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, “You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off.”

The same phenomenon of naming servants as Israel or Jacob occurs in Isa 44:1–2, 44:21, 45:4, 48:20, and 49:3 (this latter within the second Servant Song, 49:1–6).⁹ In our first Isaiah, servants are seldom any-

⁷ For fuller discussions, see the relevant sections of Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox 2001), and Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55* (AB 19B; New York: Doubleday, 2002), esp. 76–81.

⁸ This is precisely the phenomenon one finds in Greek versions of Isaiah, as I shall show below.

⁹ The NRSV reads “Moses his servant” at Isa 63:11. The Hebrew here, however, is עַמּוֹ, not עַבְדּוֹ.

mous. Within our Second Isaiah, any “servant” is often a collective entity, not an individual. Even if the Servant Songs (in which, apart from Isa 49:3, the Servant appears quite anonymous) were composed separately and subsequently incorporated into Second Isaiah, readers for whom Isaiah was a unitary, scriptural, canonical work could either have understood the generally anonymous Servant of the four Songs in light of specific identifications elsewhere, or have read Isaiah in a somewhat atomistic fashion and thus not linked the Songs. Both possibilities render the perception of a coherent, distinct Servant figure on the part of ancient readers unlikely. Given what we know of ancient Jewish interpretive practices, it is implausible that the four Songs would have been seen as a block that identified a specific individual. Thus, understanding any and every appearance of *παῖς* in Christian literature as calling for an evocation of the Servant metaconcept is fundamentally unsound.

LXX Isaiah

The Greek versions of the Servant Songs present three pertinent issues which complicate the question of the Servant’s existence and function.

First, the translator often makes anonymous references to servants in the MT specific, likely the fruit of MT Isaiah’s frequent description of servants as Israel/Jacob. For instance, Jacob is specified as “my servant” and Israel as “my chosen” in Isa 42:1 LXX. Here it is the nation of Israel/Jacob that is envisioned as bringing justice/judgment (*κρίσις*) and hope to the nations, not an anonymous Servant.¹⁰

Second, the translator renders *עַבְדִּי* with two different Greek terms (*παῖς* and *δοῦλος*) in a seemingly random manner throughout LXX Isaiah. This suggests that the translator neither perceived *עַבְדִּי* as a title for a distinct personage nor presented such a personage to be readily perceived by others. In regard to the Servant Songs, the first and third have *παῖς* consistently, but the second and fourth have both *παῖς* and *δοῦλος*. The second Song has *δοῦλος* for *עַבְדִּי* in 49:3 and 49:5 but *παῖς* in 49:6. In the fourth Song, *παῖς* renders *עַבְדִּי* in 52:13. In 53:11, however, it is not *παῖς* or *δοῦλος* but rather a participial form of the latter, *δουλεύοντα*. The translator has read the unpointed Hebrew of 53:11

¹⁰ This identification of the Servant with Israel continues in the second Song (49:3). In this instance, however, it is not an interpretation as such, since the MT text itself identifies the Servant as Israel.

in a way quite different from the Masoretes. The Hebrew reads יְצַדִּיק לְרַבִּים צָדִיק עַבְדִּי (‘‘The righteous one, my Servant, shall make many righteous’’), but the Greek reads [καὶ βούλεται κύριος]...δικαιῶσαι δίκαιον εἰς δουλεύοντα πολλοῖς (‘‘and the Lord wills...to make righteous the righteous one who serves many well’’). The Hebrew appears to have appositional titles, but the Greek has no Servant title. The Greek translator of Isaiah neither perceives nor presents a Suffering Servant figure. One should not simply assume that the translator perceived a Suffering Servant figure and modified the concept to suit his purposes.¹¹ Further, and more importantly, even if the translator had done so, we could not presume that his audience and later readers of the Greek would read in a redaction-critical way and thus sense the significance of the changes.

Third, the Greek version of the fourth Song, Isa 52:13–53:12, the most important Song in the debate regarding the possible influence of the Suffering Servant concept, is radically different from the Hebrew. The Hebrew presents the death of ‘‘the righteous one, my Servant’’ (53:11) as an offering willed by God (53:4b, 10), but the Greek does precisely the converse. According to the Greek version, the suffering of the παῖς (52:13; but δίκαιον, ‘‘righteous one,’’ in 53:11b) is not God’s doing, and in any event this suffering does not entail death.¹²

In regard to the divine will in the matter, the Hebrew at 53:4b reads מַכָּה אֱלֹהִים (‘‘smitten by God’’), but the Greek omits this, simply stating that ‘‘he’’ (οὗτος; perhaps the παῖς of 52:13 and the righteous one of 53:11b, if one reads 52:13–53:12 as a coherent section; whether the ancients did is an open question) was considered to be ἐν πλῆγῃ (‘‘misfortune,’’ ‘‘plague,’’ ‘‘beating’’); no reference is made to divine agency. Further, the Hebrew of 53:10a indicates that the Servant’s suffering is the Lord’s will (וַיְהוֹה חָפֵץ דְּכָאוֹ הַחַלִּי), but the Greek reverses this, indicating that the Lord desires to cleanse him from his misfortune: καὶ κύριος βούλεται καθαρίσαι αὐτὸν τῆς πλῆγῆς. The Greek, then,

¹¹ See Calvin Ekblad, *Isaiah’s Servant Songs according to the Septuagint: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (CBET 23; Leuven: Peeters, 1999). Ekblad’s heavily redactional approach simply assumes that the translator perceived a well-defined Servant concept in the Hebrew. He thus finds great theological development in the supposed Servant concept in LXX Isaiah, without fully considering whether the changes might indicate that the translator did not in fact see or re-present a Servant figure.

¹² For what follows, see David A. Sapp, ‘‘The LXX, 1QIsa, and MT Versions of Isaiah 53 and the Christian Doctrine of Atonement,’’ in Bellingier and Farmer, *Jesus and the Suffering Servant*, 170–92.

envision the LORD delivering the παῖς/οὗτος/δίκαιος from being ἐν πλῆγῃ. In brief, God does not will the Suffering of the παῖς/οὗτος/δίκαιος in the Greek version of the fourth Song; on the contrary, God desires to rescue him from his suffering.

In regard to the extent of the suffering, the Greek of 53:9–10 indicates that the παῖς/οὗτος/δίκαιος does not actually endure death. 53:9 is striking:

וַיִּתֵּן¹³ אֶת־רָשָׁעִים קִבְרוֹ וְאֶת־עֲשִׂיר בְּמַתְיוֹ עַל לֹא־חֶמֶס עָשָׂה וְלֹא מְרֹמָה בָּפִי
καὶ δώσω τοὺς πονηροὺς ἄντι τῆς ταφῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ τοὺς πλουσίους ἄντι
τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ ὅτι ἄνομίαν οὐκ ἐποίησεν οὐδὲ εὐρέθη δόλος ἐν τῷ
στόματι αὐτοῦ

In the Hebrew the Servant has his grave *with* the wicked and his death *with* a rich man. In the Greek, however, God will give the wicked *instead* of his grave and the rich *instead* of his death. By employing the causal ὅτι for the concessive על, the Greek presents the Servant's righteous behavior as the grounds for his deliverance; in the Hebrew, the Servant dies in spite of his lack of iniquity and deceit.

In regard to the potential atoning value of the Servant, 53:10b is also noteworthy, for the Servant's life is in no way considered an offering for sin. A comparison is again instructive:

אִם־תִּשָּׂא אִשָּׁם נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה זֶרַע יֶאֱרִיךְ יָמָיו
ἐὰν δώτε περὶ ἁμαρτίας ἡ ψυχὴ ὑμῶν ὄψεται σπέρμα μακρόβιον

One may read תִּשָּׂא either as a third-person feminine singular with נַפְשׁוֹ as the subject, or as a second-person masculine singular with נַפְשׁוֹ as an object in apposition to אִשָּׁם, as one sees in the different renderings of the RSV and NRSV ("When he makes himself an offering for sin," and "When you make his life an offering for sin," respectively). The Greek goes somewhat beyond the possibilities afforded by the grammatical vagaries of the MT and provides here an instance of "personalization," in which the translator redirects verbs in MT Isaiah towards the contemporary audience of LXX Isaiah.¹⁴ It is now the plural

¹³ Following Qumran, the RSV and NRSV read and translate a plural form of נתן.

¹⁴ The term is that of David Baer, who notes, "The translator is persuaded that his text speaks as much to and about 'you' and 'us' (i.e. his audience, sometimes including himself) as it does to and about his forebears in ancient Israel. He wants to introduce his readers into the Isaiah text, to massage the links between the original protagonists and the Jewish community of his day" (*When We All Go Home: Translation and Theology*

“you” who are to “give for sins” so that “your (pl.) soul will see a long lived seed.” Greek Isaiah thus forsakes the idea that the Servant’s שַׁפּוֹ is a sin offering. In Greek Isaiah’s fourth Song, “the Lord vindicates the righteous one who serves the many well by cutting short his agony and saving him from death at the hands of wicked people.”¹⁵ Since Greek versions of the Old Testament were the Bible for most of the early churches and since the New Testament documents were written in Greek, one should not pass over the radical differences between the Greek and Hebrew of Second Isaiah too quickly. One cannot simply assume that allusions to or citations of Servant material in Greek are references to the putative content of the Hebrew MT.¹⁶

Targum Isaiah

Unlike the Hebrew or the Greek, the Aramaic Targum to Isaiah does link a Servant Song with the Messiah. At 52:13 it reads: “Behold, my Servant the Messiah shall prosper, he shall be exalted and increase, and shall be very strong.”¹⁷ Yet the Targum removes almost all references to the suffering of the Servant present in the MT version of this Song and applies them to the enemies of the Messiah or Israel. The Targum at 53:4–5 reads:

in LXX Isaiah 56–66 [JSOTSup 318; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001], 53). Baer finds over 200 instances of such in LXX Isaiah (59).

¹⁵ Sapp, “Versions of Isaiah 53,” 182. Emphasis original. In light of the radical revision found in vv. 9–10, Sapp understands 53:8b and 53:12 to be saying that the Servant was delivered up to the point of death, not that the Servant actually underwent death (176–84).

¹⁶ Sapp does not follow the import of his analysis fully through, for he closes his essay by insisting on the decisive importance of a Hebrew Servant concept as traditionally understood for New Testament Christology. In his view, allusions in Greek allude not to Greek Isaiah but rather to the content of the MT: “The Christian doctrine of atonement rests upon an understanding of Isaiah 53 that is fully preserved only in the Hebrew versions... A number of New Testament passages need to be reexamined in light of the Hebrew of Isaiah 53 [Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45, 14:24; Acts 3:13; Rom 5:15, 19; Phil 2:7; 1 Jn 3:5a]... If allusions to Isaiah 53:10–11 exist, they would most likely be to the Hebrew, not to the Greek... When the early Christians wanted to tell the message of Christ’s sacrificial death using [LXX Isa 53] vv. 10–11b, they could not quote the Greek. They could only allude to the Hebrew” (ibid., 187–88, emphasis original).

¹⁷ *Tg. Isa.* 42:1, however, does not contain a reference to the Messiah. Such a reference appears in the 1st and 2nd Rabbinic Bibles, the Antwerp Polyglot, Reuchlinianus, and the ms. Jew’s College. See Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum: Introduction, Translation, Apparatus and Notes* (ArBib 11; Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1987), 80–81. It should be noted that Isa 43:10 speaks of “my servant the Messiah” outside of the context of a Servant Song, and 53:10 includes a reference to “the kingdom of their Messiah” (if the reference to “Messiah” should be there).

Then he will beseech concerning our sins and our iniquities for his sake will be forgiven; yet we were esteemed wounded, smitten before the LORD and afflicted. And he will build the sanctuary that was profaned for our sins, handed over for our iniquities; and by his teaching his peace will increase upon us, and in that we attach ourselves to his words our sins will be forgiven us.¹⁸

Chilton notes, "...in no sense can the Messiah...be said to suffer. Indeed, the point of the interpretation is to emphasize the triumph of the Messiah (cf. 52:13–15) at the expense of 'all the kingdoms' (v. 3a; cf. vv. 7, 11, 12)."¹⁹ Chilton further suggests that this creative interpretation is not a reaction to Christian claims about Jesus; it is not that the Messiah and any Servant were equated earlier in Jewish tradition. If the Targumic rewriting of this fourth Song were a reaction to Christian claims, 53:12 would not include the claim that the Messiah handed over his soul to death. Chilton writes:

It would appear that such Christian claims were not in mind. Rather, the point of the phrase is probably that the Messiah risked his very life for the sake of his ministry; that appears to be the sense in which Isa 53:12 is applied to the hero Phinehas (cf. Numbers 25:13) in *Sifre* (131).²⁰

8.2.3 Summary

In sum, there is little evidence that a Suffering Servant figure was present in the Jewish cultural encyclopedia relevant for the interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew, either as a coming, Messianic redeemer or as a discrete anonymous figure from the past upon which a typology could be constructed (such as the figures of Moses, Isaac, etc.). The vicarious suffering present in the fourth Hebrew Servant Song is not exploited; it is either irrelevant (Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon), or radically revised (LXX, *Tg. Isa.*) or simply not in view (2 Esdras/4 Ezra, *Enoch*). There was no Suffering Servant in the ancient Jewish encyclopedia for New Testament writers to draw upon to explain Jesus' life and death or to be perceived by their readers. The Greek and Hebrew differ radically in Second Isaiah. The only possible locus where one might find a Servant figure as understood by modern scholars is the Hebrew version of Second Isaiah itself. Even there, however, the term עֶבֶד is in many

¹⁸ Trans. Chilton.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 103–05, notes on 53:1–53:12.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

places identified as Israel, and this identification could have colored readings in places in which the Servant is anonymous, as seems to have happened in Greek Isaiah.

8.3 MATTHEAN QUOTATIONS OF ISAIANIC “SERVANT” MATERIAL: HEALING AND GENTILE INCLUSION

In light of the above, if the Gospel were to present a Suffering Servant figure from Second Isaiah, it would have to coin to concept *de novo* and indicate and delineate the concept in a strong, striking, conspicuous and explicit fashion. Since no Servant concept existed in the encyclopedia, simple allusions—and even the rather free citations at Matt 8:17 and 12:17–21—do not indicate that the Gospel presents Jesus in terms of a newly coined Suffering Servant. If the Matthean text presents such, one must find evidence of it in the Gospel itself without simply assuming that the concept existed and that any use of material from Second Isaiah is meant to evoke all four Songs and the entirety of Second Isaiah and the supposed Suffering Servant metaconcept therein. The Isaianic selections found in Matt 8:17 and 12:17–21 root Jesus’ ministry in the Old Testament in general and illuminate certain motifs in particular; they do not present an overarching view of Jesus as the Suffering Servant.

8.3.1 *Matt 8:17 and Isa 53:4a*

As Luz rightly observes with significant understatement, the citation of Isa 53:4a in Matt 8:17 “wurde oft überinterpretiert.”²¹ Those who would claim that this brief citation would call up the entire background of Isa 53 should take the theoretical and exegetical pains to demonstrate it, but often one finds only sweeping assertions made on questionable grounds.²² The difficulties presented in the present project are seldom

²¹ Luz, *Matthäus*, 2:19.

²² For instance, Davies and Allison write, “... the quotation in 8.17... makes Jesus the servant of Deutero-Isaiah” (*Saint Matthew*, 2:4). They quote Gerhardsson with approval, who writes, “[T]he spotlight is not giving a broad and general sweep over what is now happening in Israel but is directed right at *Jesus’ person and ministry*; thus the primary function of the quotation is a Christological one. The prophetic words seem to be usable because Jesus is considered as ‘the Servant of the Lord’” (Gerhardsson, *The Mighty Acts of Jesus according to Matthew*, 25, cited by Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:37; emphasis original to Gerhardsson).

discussed. Three issues complicate the idea that this particular citation functions to present Jesus as the Isaianic Suffering Servant:

First, as shown above, one finds scant evidence that the Suffering Servant was a coherent, available category. It is thus unlikely that this brief citation could present Jesus as the Suffering Servant of MT Isa 53. As Don Juel notes, "If it could be demonstrated that the suffering servant was a distinct personality, well known in Jewish tradition, the argument might be plausible that no more than vague allusions [or, for our purposes, a most cursory citation] were needed to conjure up the whole servant tradition among Jesus' followers or in later Christian circles."²³ Since, however, there was not a well-established Servant tradition, the Gospel would need to use much more of Isa 53 if the Model Reader is to see Jesus as "the Suffering Servant," for it would be something unique to the Gospel of Matthew.²⁴

Second, the Matthean co-text and topic of the citation has nothing to do with vicarious suffering or atonement. Rather, the topic concerns healing. It is placed at the end of a triad of healing stories (8:1–17) in a section largely consisting of miracle stories (8:1–9:34). If there were something in the narrative co-text indicating that vicarious atonement (or other significant aspects of MT Isa 53) was in view, then perhaps one could argue that the whole of MT Isa 53 should be in view. Yet on the basis of the principle of coherence of the narrative co-text it appears that the citation functions simply to root Jesus' healing ministry in Scripture.

Third, the wording of the quotation complicates matters for those who would see the putative Servant in the background. The Matthean text reads αὐτὸς τὰς ἀσθενείας ἡμῶν ἔλαβεν καὶ τὰς νόσους ἐβάστασεν,

²³ Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, 121.

²⁴ It is of course possible that the empirical author of the Gospel of Matthew read Second Isaiah and saw there a Suffering Servant and effectively coined the concept, for writers may indeed perceive and present certain things *de novo*. Traditions of interpretation must have a beginning somewhere. That the author perceived and created the Suffering Servant, however, is quite unlikely, for the concept is not fully explicated in any fashion in his Gospel. Citation and allusion function with a law of inverse reference: the more well known a story or figure, the less needed to evoke it. Conversely, the less well known a story or figure, the more needed to evoke it. Therefore, since (1) the Suffering Servant most likely did not exist in the encyclopedia of early Judaism, and (2) Matthew does not do enough to indicate that he is presenting Jesus as the Suffering Servant, the Suffering Servant is a meaningless concept for proper historical investigation of the Gospel of Matthew. Canonical interpretation, however, which rightly permits creative and salutary readings, may be a different story. In Eco's terms, certain versions of canonical interpretation would amount to *use*, not interpretation proper.

which is closer to the MT than the Greek but does not match either. Therefore one cannot simply assume that this quotation points to the wider context of our MT text. The Matthean wording paints a substantively different picture than the wording of the MT. Although dedicated to the importance of the traditional Servant concept, Davies and Allison note that ἔλαβεν for נָשָׂא eliminates the possibility of vicarious suffering: Jesus takes away sicknesses; he does not take them into his person.²⁵ Further, employing νόσος for מַכְאוֹב “puts the emphasis upon physical difficulties,”²⁶ which, again, Jesus removes or bears away (ἐβάστασεν). In a most significant admission for commentators who elsewhere emphasize the importance of the traditional Servant concept for Matthean Christology, they then concede:

Even though Mt 8.17 is a possible rendering of Isa 53.4, it cannot be rightly said that the NT verse captures the true sense of the OT text. In Isaiah the servant suffers vicariously, carrying infirmities in himself; in the Gospel he heals the sick by *taking away* their diseases. In the OT the distress seems to be mental or spiritual; in Matthew physical illnesses are the subject. So a text about vicarious suffering has become a text about healing, and two different pictures are involved.²⁷

If this is so, can one reasonably maintain that the brief citation is designed to present Jesus as the Suffering Servant figure of MT Isa 53 or, indeed, all four Servant Songs or all of “second” Isaiah? We do not know exactly what versions of Isa 53 the empirical author and his community possessed. Given the diversity of ancient Bible versions and the nature of the wording of Matthean citations, we should not assume they were identical with or similar to our Isa 53 MT. It is most likely that the function of the quotation here is atomistic,²⁸ that the empirical author provided precisely the part of Isaiah he wanted in the particular

²⁵ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:37.

²⁶ Ibid., 2:38.

²⁷ Ibid. Emphasis original. In her recent monograph, Novakovic comes to similar conclusions: “Matthew’s citation does not have any exact parallel in other Greek versions... it is likely that it represents Matthew’s own rendering of the Hebrew text of Isa 53:4a. It is noteworthy that Matthew left out that part of the citation that speaks about the suffering of the servant of Yahweh. This means that Matthew interprets the prophecy not as atonement for sin, but as the taking away of literal sickness” (*Messiah*, 126–27).

²⁸ Luz writes, “Es wird hier genau derjenige Teil von Jes 53,3–5 herausgegriffen, der nicht vom Leiden des Gottesknechts spricht. Unser Zitat ist ein Beispiel dafür, daß frühchristliche wie damalige jüdische Exegese einzelne Schriftworte manchmal (!) völlig unabhängig von ihrem Kontext zitiert” (*Matthäus*, 2:19).

form he wanted, and thus that his hearers would likely not have perceived a reference to any Servant figure. The best judgment would be an attitude of suspicion towards the role of any sort of Servant figure for the Gospel.

8.3.2 *Matt 12:17–21 and Isa 42:1–4*

What, then, of the more substantive of the two citations of Servant material, Isa 42:1–4 in Matt 12:17–21, which actually contains the words “my servant” (ὁ παῖς μου)? If this citation does not present Jesus as the Isaianic Suffering Servant,²⁹ what is its rationale and function? The answer is found in the convergence of two Matthean motifs: Jesus as obedient Israel, a singular embodiment of the collective nation, and Jesus’ conflict with the Jewish leadership, which leads to Jesus’ death and the inclusion of Gentiles.

We have seen above how Jesus, the beloved Son of God, is presented as the embodiment of Israel in the context of the Matthean inversion of Israel and certain Gentiles (Hos 11:1–2; Matt 2:19–21) and how Jesus in the wilderness obeys perfectly, unlike ancient Israel in the wilderness (Matt 4:1–11; Deut 6, 8). The Matthean story contrasts Jesus as the new Israel not only with ancient Israel, however, but also with the leaders of Israel contemporary with Jesus. As the narrative progresses, an ever-increasing hostility to Jesus on the part of the Jewish leadership develops, which, in turn, leads to Jesus’ death and Gentile inclusion. Although there are strong indications early in the narrative that the purposes of God extend to the Gentiles (e.g., the visit of the Magi, the citation of Isa 9:1–2 in Matt 4:15–16 and the centurion’s faith in Matt 8:5–13, esp. v. 10), the mission of Jesus is a mission to Israel (10:5–6; 15:21–28) until the rejection of Jesus on the part of the Jewish leadership leads to the inclusion of the Gentiles (21:43; 28:19–20).³⁰

On this point it is helpful to read the Gospel of Matthew in light of the narrative structure for which Kingsbury has contended.³¹ From Matt 4:17 to 16:20 Jesus proclaims the Kingdom in his ministry to Israel, but after encountering strong opposition from the Jewish leadership,

²⁹ Menken contends that “there is a LXX basis in Matthew’s text... The textual form of the quotation is best considered as a revised LXX” (“The Quotation from Isaiah 42,1–4 in Matthew 12,18–21: Its Textual Form,” *ETL* 75 [1999]: 52).

³⁰ Compare the pattern in Acts, wherein Jewish rejection of the gospel leads to the inclusion of Gentiles (18:6; 28:23–28), or Paul’s thoughts in Rom 9–11.

³¹ See the discussion of structure in chapter 6.

particularly in 11:2–16:20, he turns his attention to his disciples. The Model Reader notes the increasing hostility of the Jewish leaders to Jesus as the narrative progresses. From 4:17 to 11:1, one encounters hints of impending conflict (e.g., 5:10–12; 5:20; 6:1–18; 7:29) but little in the way of open hostile confrontation. In Matt 9, Jesus has no serious public conflict with any figures of Jewish leadership: Jesus' declaration of forgiveness to the paralytic (9:1–8) provokes the scribes to question "in their hearts" (9:3) whether Jesus is blaspheming, not in the open. A similar situation obtains in 9:34: "But the Pharisees said, 'By the ruler of demons he casts out demons.'" Even if this verse belongs in the text,³² the Pharisees are talking among themselves; their speech is directed to no one in particular and no one hears or responds to it. In Matt 9:11 and 9:14 the Model Reader finds questions posed by the Pharisees and the disciples of John regarding the behavior of Jesus and the disciples, but there is no indication of threat, no response to Jesus' responses. In short, in Matt 9, the scribes and the Pharisees (and the disciples of John) are simply suspicious of Jesus and his disciples. As Kingsbury notes, "Jesus is not himself directly attacked for something he himself does" in this chapter.³³

The situation is altogether different in Matt 11:2–16:20, particularly in ch. 12. Encounters with the Jewish leadership become more confrontational and even give rise to the desire for Jesus' murder (12:14). Jesus has critical words for "this generation" (τὴν γενεάν ταύτην, 11:16) and the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum (11:20–24). The Pharisees accuse Jesus directly, saying, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath" (12:2). Gone are probing questions such as those of 9:11 and 9:14. The Pharisees deliberately provoke Jesus in the synagogue "so that they might accuse him" (12:9–10). After Jesus heals the man with the withered hand, the Pharisees engage in a conspiracy to kill Jesus (ὥπως αὐτὸν ἀπολέσωσιν, 12:14; cf. 27:20).³⁴

³² The verse is omitted by D a k sys Hil.

³³ Kingsbury, "Developing Conflict," 68.

³⁴ A strong indication that the situation has changed between chapters 9 and 12 is the different frames of reference given to Hos 6:6 in Matt 9:13 on one hand and Matt 12:7 on the other. In the former, the Pharisees are instructed to "go and learn" what Hos 6:6 means. In the latter, however, the text indicates the Pharisees have not done what they were instructed in 9:13. Here the Matthean Jesus employs a past contrary-to-fact conditional: "If you had known what this means...you would not have condemned the innocent." The Pharisees were instructed to learn the import of Hos 6:6 in chapter 9; because they have failed to do so in the meantime, they have indeed condemned the innocent.

We thus come to the block of Isaianic Servant material. It is significant that it comes immediately after Jesus withdraws upon his learning of the Pharisees' plot (12:14). The material does not present Jesus as the Suffering Servant. Rather, the material fits well with the Matthean motif of the rejection of Jesus precipitating Gentile inclusion.³⁵ The similarity of the pattern in the first half of Matt 4 confirms this. Jesus faces the temptation of the devil (4:1–11), with whom the Jewish leaders are associated in the Matthean narrative world by virtue of their being "evil" (9:3–4; 12:26; 12:34; 12:39, 45; 16:4),³⁶ and then "withdraws" (ἀναχωρέω) upon hearing of John's arrest (4:12). His withdrawal is the occasion for a quotation of Isaianic material that pertains to Gentile inclusion (Isa 9:1–2 in Matt 4:15–16). Thus in both chapters 4 and 12 we have a similar pattern: threat, Jesus' becoming aware thereof, withdrawal, and a citation of Isaianic material bearing on Gentiles:

	4:1–16	12:9–21
Threat	Jesus tested by the devil (vv. 1–11) and his forerunner John arrested (v. 12)	Pharisees conspire to destroy Jesus (v. 14)
Awareness	Ακούσας δὲ ὅτι Ἰωάννης παρεδόθη (v. 12)	Ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς γνοὺς (v. 15)
Withdrawal	ἀνεχώρησεν εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν (v. 12)	ἀνεχώρησεν ἐκεῖθεν (v. 15)
Isaiah	from Isa 9:1–2: "Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles..." (v. 15)	from Isa 42:1–4: "...and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles...and in his name the Gentiles will hope" (vv. 18, 21)

The pattern is conspicuous, especially given that ἀναχωρέω appears in both loci.³⁷ The motif is the theme of Gentile inclusion. The material

³⁵ See Jerome Neyrey, "The Thematic Use of Isaiah 42,1–4 in Matthew 12," *Biblica* 63 (1982): 457–73. Neyrey sees the quotation tied very tightly to the surrounding narrative.

³⁶ Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 19–24, 115–27.

³⁷ This verb also occurs in the context of threat and retreat in Matt 2:12 (the Magi's withdrawal), 2:14 (Joseph's withdrawal to Egypt), 2:22 (Joseph's withdrawal to Galilee), 14:13 (Jesus' withdrawal after hearing of John the Baptist's summary execution), 15:21 (after controversy with the Pharisees and scribes regarding handwashing), and 27:5 (Judas' departure to commit suicide). In 9:24 Jesus himself employs the word, com-

does not present Jesus as the Suffering Servant of modern scholarship, based on all four Servant Songs and centering on vicarious atonement. Rather, it presents the beloved Son of God Jesus as the Israel who serves faithfully, in contrast to the Pharisees, whose repudiation of Jesus and his message leads to Jesus' rejection of the Jewish leadership (cf. 21:43), his death and the inclusion of the Gentiles (cf. 28:19–20). That Isa 42:1–4 belongs to what we moderns call the “Servant Songs” is simply fortuitous.³⁸

Given the complications surrounding the existence and function of the putative Servant figure in the encyclopedia and the alternative functions of the Matthean versions of Isa 53:4 and 42:1–4 sketched here, suspicion is justified regarding the presence and function of other proposed allusions to Isaianic Servant material in the Gospel of Matthew. Although commentators propose many instances of allusions to Isaianic Servant material in the Gospel of Matthew, examining two prominent instances should suffice.

8.3.3 *Allusions to the Servant?*

Matt 20:28

Matthew 20:28 (= Mark 10:45) is often said to allude to Servant material, even though precise connections are tenuous. David Hill writes, “Although the actual language of Isa. 53.11–12 is hardly reflected in the saying... it cannot be doubted that the thought and atmosphere of the passage from the Servant songs has contributed something to this verse.”³⁹ Similarly, Davies and Allison note, “it must be admitted that there are few verbal links with the LXX.”⁴⁰ They thus provide several points of possible verbal and conceptual contact with the MT, and state, “We do not claim that Mt 20.28 par. is a translation of any portion of

manding the crowd mourning the dead girl to depart. See Dierdre Good, “The Verb ANAXΩPEΩ in Matthew’s Gospel,” *NovT* 32 (1990): 1–12.

³⁸ So Luz, who writes, “The central fulfillment quotation 12:18–21 does not speak of the servant of God but, in the biblical language of Isaiah, of the child of God, i.e. the Son who is familiar to readers from 3:17. Placed in the center of the Gospel of Matthew, the words from Isaiah 42:1–4 give readers the opportunity to view the whole story of Jesus the beloved, chosen, peace-loving Son of God who will judge the world and be the hope of the heathen. There is no specifically Matthean servant of God christology in Matt. 12:18–21” (Luz, “Matthean Christology,” 95).

³⁹ Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1972), 289.

⁴⁰ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 3:95.

Isa 53, LXX, MT, or Targum. Rather, it is a summary which describes the *'ebed* who gives his life as a sin offering for many."⁴¹ The strongest piece of verbal evidence is found in the last two words of Matthew's phrase, ἀντὶ πολλῶν, for רבים appears three times in Isa 53:11–12, and the Matthean phrase is said to parallel the לרבים of Isa 53:11 itself. Yet this in itself is not enough to evoke the whole Servant metaconcept, especially in light of the fact that λύτρον is never used to translate אָשָׁם (Isa 53:10 MT) in the LXX. The reason commentators such as Davies and Allison find the Servant concept is because they believe the Matthean text (20:28) implies some sort of substitutionary vicarious atonement: Matt 20:28 is "a summary which describes the *'ebed* who gives his life as a sin offering for many,"⁴² which "states that Jesus was—note the one-time aorist—an atonement offering, a substitution, a ransom for sins,"⁴³ and, in their view, "surely the universal efficacy of a martyr's death must have its roots in Isaiah 53."⁴⁴ What if, however, Matt 20:28 involves a different view of atonement, such as a classic Christus Victor model? Or, what if the "universal efficacy of a martyr's death" has its roots in Gen 22 (as in 4 Maccabees)? There would then be no need to see the Servant behind Matt 20:28.

Matt 26:28

The words over the cup at the Lord's Supper (a passage with which we will deal in more detail in chapter 10) in Matt 26:28 is another locus where scholars often find an allusion to Servant material: τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυννόμενον εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν.⁴⁵ Davies and Allison maintain that Matthew "altered the ὑπὲρ of Mk 14.24 = Mt 26.28 to περὶ to strengthen the allusion to LXX Isaiah 53:4" but also assert in the same passage that the empirical author of Matthew "read Isaiah in Hebrew[.]"⁴⁶ If Matthew is alluding to Isa 53:4 LXX, the problem of Greek Isaiah's peculiar presentation of Servant material arises, as detailed above. That the author has Isa 53

⁴¹ Ibid., 3:96.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 3:100.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 3:96.

⁴⁵ For instance, see Clay Ham, "The Last Supper in Matthew," *BBR* 10 (2000): 53–69.

⁴⁶ Ibid.; see also *ibid.*, 3:474.

(MT!) in mind here or that the Model Reader is supposed to actualize such a reference is doubtful. And again, there may be a different model of atonement operating in Matt 26:28; if one finds an allusion to Exod 24:8 here (τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης/דִּם־בְּרִית) and if “forgiveness of sins” concerns liberation from exile, we may be dealing with a soteriology of deliverance. Jesus’ blood may not achieve some sort of vicarious atonement; it may indeed achieve deliverance from the devil and his minions, against which Jesus the beloved Son of God goes forth to war in the Matthean narrative.

8.3.4 Summary

The examination here is of necessity cursory, but, as Morna Hooker has shown, finding allusions to Isa 53 or other Servant material in these and other passages rests on the most tenuous of connections.⁴⁷ Further, even if the Gospel of Matthew does contain allusions to Servant material, one must be careful not to overinterpret such allusions. It may be that individual sections of Isaiah are in view to present Jesus as a righteous sufferer in the same way certain Psalmic material is appropriated. What drives the fascination with the Suffering Servant metaconcept is the figure’s potent poignancy and its apparent general fit with the Matthean Jesus. The Isaac of Jewish tradition, however, fits better, for three reasons: (1) the Gospel actually contains much more allusive syntactical parallelism with texts pertaining to Isaac than the supposed Servant;⁴⁸ (2) the Akedah is a tradition of greater importance in the Jewish cultural encyclopedia than any Servant figure; and (3) the Isaac of the Akedah resembles the Matthean Jesus to a much more significant degree; as we have seen, it is not only in death but also in conception and birth that the Matthean Jesus resembles Isaac.

8.4 SUMMARY: ὁ ἀγαπητός μου IN MATT 12:18

Be all that as it may, what is the interpreter to do with the presence of ὁ ἀγαπητός μου in Matt 12:18? The question does not involve redactional concerns, involving hypotheses about text-types and the evangelist’s

⁴⁷ Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant*, 74–79 and 80–83, respectively.

⁴⁸ The quotations have alternative functions, as we have seen.

ever-elusive hand. The question is, what should the Model Reader make of this? What is its poetic function?

The co-text of Matt 12, particularly the conspiracy of the Pharisees to destroy Jesus (ὅπως αὐτὸν ἀπολέσωσιν, 12:14), concerns threat, specifically death. The themes of threat in general and death in particular coupled with what the Model Reader already suspects about the relevance of the figure of Isaac and the Akedah from prior reading (1:1, 2–17, 18–25; 3:17 in the context of 3–4) lead the Model Reader to perceive a reference to Isaac here. Further, what was intimated in 3–4 is here shown clearly. The Pharisees, under the aegis of the devil, threaten Jesus with death. In Matt 3, the Pharisees (and Sadducees) were contrasted with Jesus in terms of obedience. In Matt 4, the devil tested and threatened Jesus. In Matt 12 the Model Reader learns that the Pharisees stand under Satan and that they seek to destroy Jesus. Thus, what was suspected in 3:17, that the co-textual topics of threat and obedience hint at the relevance of the Akedah, is here confirmed where the phrase ὁ ἀγαπητός μου is explicitly connected with the threat of death and Jesus is explicitly compared with the Pharisees. The Akedah functions in Isa 42:1 here to intimate not only that Jesus, unlike the Pharisees, is the Son of God, the Israel who serves faithfully, but that his service likely entails sacrificial death, a hypothesis which will be confirmed in further reading (e.g. 16:21; 26:28). If one insists that the Matthean Jesus must be deemed the Servant, however, it should be with direct reference to the Servant passage the Gospel cites most extensively, Isa 42:1–4, and in the form in which the Gospel cites it. We would thus have a sort of intertextual fusion of Jesus as the beloved Son like Isaac, the obedient sacrificial victim, and a limited, circumscribed Servant figure, whose victorious mission provides hope for the Gentiles.

It is significant that the transfiguration, the next passage with which we will deal, situates a reference to Jesus as the beloved Son in the co-text of passion predictions, being intimately tied to Matt 16:13–28 and ending with reference to Jesus' resurrection (17:9) and suffering (17:13). Further, since ὁ ἀγαπητός μου here in 12:18 evokes aspects of the Akedah and the Pharisees are seeking Jesus' death under the influence of Satan, the sacrificial death of Jesus involves unwitting human cooperation with the divine plan in a cosmic, apocalyptic struggle. In an apocalyptic, dualistic worldview, human events ultimately stand under God's control, and the worldview of the Matthean story is deeply apocalyptic, a feature often neglected. As we will see in dealing with

the scenes of Gethsemane and the arrest, God incorporates human hostility to Jesus into the divine plan in bringing about the sacrifice of his beloved Son.

CHAPTER NINE

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE BELOVED SON

9.1 THE HEAVENLY VOICE AS *THEOLOGIA CRUCIS*

Prior to the transfiguration, the Matthean Model Reader has encountered significant verbal and thematic clues that the Matthean text intends to evoke echoes of the figure of Isaac, both in terms of his extraordinary birth and also in terms of his sacrificial death, and establish a typology thereby. In the heavenly voice from the cloud at the transfiguration, the Model Reader encounters another striking verbal allusion to Gen 22, identical in form to the heavenly voice at the baptism. This time, however, the topic of the narrative co-text is explicit regarding Jesus' sacrificial death, unlike the situation at the baptism, where it is implicit. With regard to the baptism, the topic of the co-text concerned mortal threat, the temptation story in particular presenting implicit hints of the cross, which led the Model Reader to consider actualizing Gen 22 and the Akedah. With regard to the transfiguration, by contrast, the co-text is explicit about the divine necessity of Jesus' passion. At Caesarea Philippi Jesus declares that his rejection, suffering, death and resurrection are necessary (δεῖ, Matt 16:21) and indeed the very will of God (16:23). After his transfiguration, Jesus orders Peter, James and John not to say anything until the Son of Man is raised from the dead (17:9) and shortly thereafter issues a truncated passion prediction (17:13). Thus, in light of what the Model Reader has previously encountered in the Matthean narrative and these significant co-textual considerations, the Model Reader hears here distinct echoes of Isaac and the Akedah (with particular reference to the motif of sacrificial death) and thus finds further confirmation of hypotheses hazarded earlier.

As with the baptism, commentators regularly neglect the allusion to Gen 22 and a role for the Akedah in the heavenly voice at the transfiguration, even though a stronger case for them can be made in light of the topic of the co-text, which explicitly concerns Jesus' sacrificial death. There are indeed good reasons for hearing decisive echoes of the figure of Isaac in the transfiguration. First, as is the case with the baptism, the verbal similarity with Gen 22 in the voice at the

transfiguration is patent, stronger than any other proposed allusion within (e.g., Ps 2:7; Isa 42:1; and here, but not at the baptism, Deut 18:15). Second, the passage is tied by thematic and verbal means to other passages where one finds a role for the Akedah. Third, the topic of the immediate narrative co-text explicitly concerns not just implicit threat (as in the baptism and testing) but the divinely ordained sacrificial death of Jesus (16:21–23; 17:9, 12). Fourth, the transfiguration (with 17:9–13) is thematically tied to 16:13–28 in a sort of double diptych; both involve the contrast of a *theologia gloriae* with a *theologia crucis*, which permits and necessitates the hearing of echoes of the Akedah in the voice at the transfiguration.

The voice (and thus the allusion to Gen 22) is the structural and thematic center of 17:1–8, therefore indicating the decisive significance of Isaac for the interpretation of the passage. In recent scholarship, however, another imposing figure has been given decisive pride of place, namely the figure of Moses. Serious questions can be raised, however, regarding not merely the significance but indeed the very presence of a Moses-Jesus typology in this passage.

9.2 A NEW MOSES?

9.2.1 *Evaluating the Moses Typology*

Ulrich Luz rightly observes the polyvalence of the transfiguration:

Die Matthäus vorgegebene Verwandlungsgeschichte ist eine »polyvalente« Geschichte, die manche Assoziationsmöglichkeiten erlaubt... Unsere Geschichte ist eine sehr eigenständige, in ihrer Art einzigartige christologische Legende, die keinesfalls durch simple Übertragung anderer Motive und Bilder auf Jesus entstanden ist.¹

The truth of Luz's statement is borne out by the diverse understandings of the transfiguration in the history of its interpretation. The scene in its various instantiations in the synoptic tradition has been considered a misplaced resurrection appearance, a scene of royal enthronement or a prolepsis of the Parousia, among other possibilities.² Currently,

¹ Luz, *Matthäus*, 2:509.

² See A. D. A. Moses, *Matthew's Transfiguration Story and Jewish-Christian Controversy* (JSNTSup 122; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 20–49, for a concise overview, as well as Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:689–93.

however, the reigning interpretation of the Matthean transfiguration in particular concerns the perceived foregrounding of Sinai motifs and the presentation of Jesus as a new Moses. Commentators point to a multitude of details for support.³ The phrase “after six days” (Matt 17:1) seems reminiscent of Exod 24:15–18, which relates that the Shekinah covered Sinai for six days (Exod 24:16). Like the Matthean Jesus, Moses is accompanied by three named adherents (Matt 17:1; Exod 24:1, 9). The mountain of Matt 17:1 perhaps recalls Sinai. Like Moses, the Matthean Jesus becomes radiant (Matt 17:2; Exod 34:29–35). Jesus’ radiance and Moses’ radiance arouse fear (Matt 17:6; Exod 34:29–30).⁴ Moses and Elijah appear in Matt 17:3, both of whom conversed with God on Sinai (cf. 1 Kgs 19:8–19). The cloud of Matt 17:5 may concern Moses and Sinai (Exod 19:16; 24:15–18; 34:5), and a cloud was certainly a major feature of wilderness traditions (Exod 13:21–22; 33:7–11; 40:34–38; Num 9:15–23). Both Matt 17:5 and Exod 24:16 share the feature of a voice from a cloud. The word ἐπισκιάζω in Matt 17:5 is found also in Exod 40:35. Finally, the last two words of the heavenly voice in Matt 17:5, ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ, may allude to Deut 18:15, Moses’ words concerning the coming eschatological prophet. In light of these allusive possibilities, Allison writes:

Various suggestions for [Matthean alterations to the Gospel of Mark] can and have been made; but simplicity recommends one proposition to account for them all: Matthew rescripted Mark in order to push thoughts towards Moses... It beggars belief to entertain coincidence for all these parallels. It also beggars belief to suppose that the scripturally learned Matthew missed them.⁵

Such forceful language, however, covers a multitude of intertextual and exegetical issues. The typological issues are much murkier than Allison’s comment here allows, a fact betrayed by several concessions. For instance, in the commentary Davies and Allison concede that “while the parallels between Jesus and Moses are striking, they are at points

³ Many of the following observations are noted by the following commentators: Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:685–87; Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 243–44; Moses, *Matthew’s Transfiguration Story*, 114–207; and Terence L. Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain: A Study in Matthean Theology* (JSNTSup 8; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 136–56.

⁴ As we will shortly see, however, in the Matthean version of the transfiguration it is actually the divine voice, and not Jesus’ radiance, which provokes fear, as Davies and Allison concede (*Saint Matthew*, 2:703).

⁵ Allison, *New Moses*, 243–44.

rather inexact,”⁶ and asserts that “one cannot...expect all the parallels to be perfect.”⁷ While the latter is generally true, serious questions can be raised regarding whether the verbal allusions and conceptual parallels reach the critical threshold necessary to warrant such strong claims about the significance of Moses and Sinai for the transfiguration. Further, even if the empirical author of the Gospel is “pushing thoughts towards Moses” (a rather brute and imprecise image) one must still ask, for what purpose? To what effect? What might be the precise import of the parallels? How do they function? What is a reader to think of Moses in relation to Jesus? It is not enough simply to hunt for sources and influences. One must interpret their precise function. Upon close examination, many of the parallels and allusions cited above prove surprisingly weak and most of the putative intertextual allusions prove to be better explained on intratextual, narrative grounds. The transfiguration is one passage where Moberly’s warning about the ingenious introduction of extraneous material to the detriment of the intrinsic narrative logic of the text is especially appropriate, as the following will illustrate.

9.2.2 *Alternative Possibilities for Potential Mosaic Allusions*

In Matt 17:1 the Model Reader learns that Jesus took along three named companions “after six days.” The “six days” of Exod 24:16, however, designate the length of time the cloud covered Sinai.⁸ Further, Moses took not only three named companions but also seventy elders (24:1, 9). Finally, although Allison suggests that the “high mountain” (ὄρος ὑψηλόν) of Matt 17:1 is an allusion to Sinai, none of the Exodus passages cited by Allison (Exod 24:12, 15–18 and 34:3) involve a *high* mountain.⁹ The Gospel of Matthew, however, does mention a “high mountain” (ὄρος ὑψηλόν) in Matt 4:8. It may therefore be better to consider intratextual references before one moves too quickly to intertextual possibilities.

In terms of intertextual possibilities, however, ὑψηλός and ὄρος do find mention in Gen 22:2 LXX: Abraham is adjured to go into the “high

⁶ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:692

⁷ *Ibid.*, 2:694.

⁸ A point made by W. L. Liefeld, “Theological Motifs in the Transfiguration Narrative,” in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study* (ed. Richard N. Longenecker and Merrill C. Tenney; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 166.

⁹ Allison, *New Moses*, 243.

land" (εἰς τὴν γῆν τὴν ὑψηλὴν) and sacrifice Isaac there "on one of the mountains" (ἐφ' ἓν τῶν ὀρέων; so too *Jub.* 18:2, Gen 22:2 Ethiopic, and ፳፻ La). On that basis, VanderKam and Milik reconstruct 4Q225 fragment 2 i.12 [= Gen 22:2b] as **ההרים הגבוהים על אחד** **לעולה לי להעלהו**: "...and offer him to me as a whole-burnt offering on one of the high mountains..."¹⁰ The mountain in the Matthean transfiguration may thus recall not Sinai but the mountain of Isaac's sacrifice.

In Matt 17:2, Jesus' transfiguration (μετεμορφώθη) is said to reflect Moses' radiance in Exod 34:29. In Matt 17:2 we find καὶ ἔλαμψεν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος, τὰ δὲ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο λευκὰ ὡς τὸ φῶς. In Exod 34:29 LXX, however, we do not find the word ἔλαμψεν; the verse reads (in part) δεδόξασται ἡ ὄψις τοῦ χρώματος τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ. The MT has קרן, for which Gundry has suggested ἔλαμψεν would be a natural translation.¹¹ But neither λάμπω nor the compound ἐκλάμπω are ever used to render קרן in the LXX. Davies and Allison thus concede that in this verse "there is no direct verbal allusion to Exod 34:29."¹² Further, "one might think it difficult to grasp why Matthew, did he have a direct reference to that passage in mind, has omitted all reference to the 'skin',"¹³ which finds mention in Exod 34:29 MT (קרן עור פניו). In spite of these difficulties, they conclude, "Nevertheless, the evangelist does bring out the essential force of the Hebrew text."¹⁴

In light of the difficulties Davies and Allison admit, however, how do we know the Hebrew text is actually in view here? Again, it may be better to find not an intertextual allusion here but an intratextual allusion. For in concluding his private explanation of the parable of the weeds in the field, the Matthean Jesus states that after the angels sent by the Son of Man cleanse the kingdom of all causes of sin and transgressors and cast them into the fiery furnace, "Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (τότε οἱ δίκαιοι ἐκλάμπουσιν ὡς ὁ ἥλιος ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῶν, Matt 13:40–43). Both Matt 13:43 and 17:2 thus have in common a form of λάμπω and the phrase ὡς ὁ ἥλιος and the transfiguration is a prolepsis

¹⁰ VanderKam and Milik, *Qumran Cave 4*, 149.

¹¹ Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament*, 30–31.

¹² Davies and Allison overlook the possibility afforded by τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ (*Saint Matthew*, 2:685).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

of the kingdom, being linked to the prior passage and therefore Jesus' words regarding the kingdom in 16:28. Further, the resurrected Jesus resembles the transfigured Jesus: ἦν δὲ ἡ εἰδέα αὐτοῦ ὡς ἀστραπή καὶ τὸ ἔνδυμα αὐτοῦ λευκὸν ὡς χιὼν (28:3); both Matt 17:2 and 28:3 thus refer to very "white" clothing. Instead of finding an allusion to Moses here, then, a better option is to understand Jesus, the primary paradigm of a righteous person (cf. 3:15 and 27:19), being presented here as a proleptic example of the final glorified state of the resurrected righteous. It is not for nothing that resurrection language is found in Matt 17:7 (ἐγέρθητε) or that certain commentators have seen the transfiguration as a displaced resurrection account or prolepsis of the Parousia. Further, in 2 Esd 7:97 and Bar 51:3 we find "the expectation that at the resurrection the faces of the righteous would shine like the sun"¹⁵ and in Rev 1:16 we find the face of the resurrected Christ shining like the sun (καὶ ἡ ὄψις αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος φαίνει ἐν τῇ δυνάμει αὐτοῦ).¹⁶

In Matt 17:3, Moses and Elijah appear (ὤφθη αὐτοῖς Μωϋσῆς καὶ Ἡλίας) and talk with Jesus. Donaldson is representative of most commentators when he asserts that the author of the Gospel of Matthew has changed the Markan phrase ὤφθη αὐτοῖς Ἡλίας σὺν Μωϋσεῖ (9:4) in order to "rescue" Moses from second place and give him pride of place.¹⁷ This perceived emphasis on Moses coheres well with the idea that Jesus is being compared to Moses but provides insufficient attention to Elijah. Even if Moses is now presented in first position, the two figures are linked with "and." Elijah is not subordinated to Moses in any other way than simple sequence, as it appears the Markan text may have subordinated Moses to Elijah (dubitable in itself) in stating "Elijah, with Moses" (Mark 9:4). The two figures are thus somewhat parallel in the Matthean version. Davies and Allison believe the connection between the two concerns their separate occasions of conversing with God on Sinai/Horeb. Even if this is so, it need not indicate a Moses typology. Other functions that would give due weight to the presence of Elijah are possible, such as the old but still valid interpretive move of understanding Moses and Elijah as respective representatives of the

¹⁵ Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News according to Matthew* (trans. David E. Green; Atlanta: John Knox, 1975), 348.

¹⁶ One thinks also of Dan 12:3: "Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."

¹⁷ Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 149.

Law and the Prophets,¹⁸ especially in light of the fact that Jesus' mission is to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (Matt 5:17–20), or seeing both as eschatological figures,¹⁹ or figures signifying the Parousia,²⁰ or figures to which Jesus is superior by virtue of his resurrection.²¹

In Matt 17:5 we encounter a cloud, supposedly reminiscent of Sinai and wilderness traditions (Exod 13:21–22; 19:16; 24:15–18; 33:7–11; 34:5; 40:34–38; Num 9:15–23). The Matthean text reads ἰδοὺ νεφέλη φωτεινὴ ἐπεσκίασεν αὐτούς, which is likely an allusion to Exod 40:35 LXX: “And Moses was not able to enter the tent of testimony, ὅτι ἐπεσκίαζεν ἐπ’ αὐτὴν ἡ νεφέλη, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.” The verse thus contains an “unmistakable” reference to the Shekinah.²² But the precise significance is often left unexplored and therefore misunderstood. While the Matthean cloud appears to link to Sinai and wilderness traditions, this does not necessarily mean that the chief import concerns a Jesus-Moses typology. It may indicate, rather, that God's dwelling place is now centered on Jesus and not the temple,²³ especially in light of the fact that in Jesus himself, God is “with us” (Matt 1:23; cf. 28:20). We may be seeing here an instance of the underexplored Matthean motif of Jesus as a new temple, rather than Jesus as a new Moses.

9.2.3 “Listen to him”: A Prophet like Moses or a Sacrifice like Isaac?

The voice from the cloud in Matt 17:5 closes with what most interpreters take to be an allusion to Deut 18:15, αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε or ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ, depending on how one resolves the text-critical issue. Deut 18:15 reads, “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers; you shall listen to him.” The final phrase is וְשָׁמַעְתָּ אֵלָיו in the pointed MT and αὐτοῦ ἀκούσεσθε in the LXX. The Matthean version is a possible rendering of the Hebrew

¹⁸ Most prominent among the commentators who advocate this position is Meier, *Matthew* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1980), 190; and idem, *Vision of Matthew*, 121–24.

¹⁹ See Liefeld, “Theological Motifs,” 173, where he argues for an eschatological understanding of Elijah but a typological understanding of Moses.

²⁰ G. H. Boobyer, “St Mark and the Transfiguration,” *JTS* 41 (1940): 119–40; idem, *St Mark and the Transfiguration Story* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1942).

²¹ Margaret E. Thrall, “Elijah and Moses in Mark's Account of the Transfiguration,” *NTS* 16 (1970): 305–17.

²² Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:701.

²³ Liefeld, “Theological Motifs,” 170.

or a possible allusion to the Greek, but this purported allusion is far from certain. It must be conceded that the case is surprisingly weak and cannot bear the weight placed upon it by those who see the passage presenting Jesus as a new Moses.

With regards to the textual issue, the NA²⁷ prints ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ with ms. support from $\aleph$ B D f¹ 33. 579. l 211 ff¹. This does not reflect the word order of Deut 18:15 in either the Greek or the Hebrew. Other Matthean mss. do have the words reversed, thus αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε, including C L W Θ f¹³ $\mathfrak{M}$ lat sy mae. The decision of the editors of the NA²⁷, ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ, however, has better textual support, being based on strong Alexandrian and Western witnesses.²⁴ The Lukan version has αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε without textual dispute (Luke 9:35) and an allusion to Deut 18:15 here would cohere well with the Lukan emphasis on Jesus as prophet. We may conclude that Matt 17:5 should read ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ and that the alternative reading is scribal assimilation to Luke 9:35 or Deut 18:15 or both. Thus, the word order does not match.

Moreover, obvious grammatical particularities complicate the case that ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ in Matt 17:5 alludes to Deut 18:15. In Matt 17:5 ἀκούετε is in all probability a present active imperative. The Hebrew of Deut 18:15 presents us with a *qal* imperfect, while the Greek employs ἀκούσεσθε, a future middle indicative.

Thus, the possibility that the Matthean voice alludes to Deut 18:15 is therefore actually rather weak: neither the word order, nor the tense, nor the voice, nor the mood of the verbs match. The allusion is considered decisive in much contemporary Matthean scholarship, however, which generally maintains that it establishes Jesus as the prophet like Moses and therefore the new Moses. As a result, the command “listen to him!” is regarded as broad in scope, charging the disciples to obey everything Jesus commands in a general sense. Davies and Allison thus assert that these words “in their broader Matthean context point to Jesus as an ethical teacher, like Moses.”²⁵ One may ask, however, if this makes sense of the passage at hand and indeed of the remainder of the divine voice to which it is directly attached. Does anything in the

²⁴ My thanks to Bart Ehrman for taking time to discuss the text-critical details of this passage with me.

²⁵ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:686. So too Schweizer: “As in 28:19–20, Matthew probably has in mind here Jesus’ ethical instruction, rather than the preceding announcement of the Passion, to which Luke 9:31 makes special reference” (*Matthew*, 349).

passage itself or the co-text concern an occasion for the remembrance of Jesus' ethical teaching in general?

It is better to understand the words as a particular, limited reference to Jesus' prior passion prediction and Peter's failure to accept it in Matt 16:21–28. Peter's desire to build three dwellings (Matt 17:4) is an extension of this failure; the phenomenon of the cloud in 17:5 interrupts Peter's words about constructing tabernacles (17:4) directly (ἐτι αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος ἰδοὺ νεφέλη φωτεινή). Thus, the import of ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ in Matt 17:5 is simply "Peter, remember the passion prediction!" In 16:21–28 Jesus presented a *theologia crucis* while Peter showed himself enamored of a *theologia gloriae*. So too in the transfiguration: the voice's emphasis on the "beloved Son" would make the parallel perfect: although Jesus is glorified here, he is still the beloved Son like Isaac who must go his way to a sacrificial death before he receives what he refused at the temptation and will receive at the resurrection and ascension.

There are therefore compelling reasons for skepticism regarding the presence and significance of Mosaic motifs in the Matthean transfiguration. In the first place, commonly accepted intertextual allusions to Mosaic material are not as strong as many commentators maintain; many are likely better understood as intratextual allusions to other portions of the Gospel. In the second place, focusing on Moses does not provide a compelling comprehensive reading of the passage's particulars; understanding the function of the Matthean version of the transfiguration as "pushing thoughts towards Moses" leaves many aspects of the passage and its broader narrative function unexplained.

Most significant, however, is the common observation that the divine voice is the structural and thematic center of the passage coupled with the common concomitant concession that its substance does not concern Moses. As A. D. A. Moses notes, "The 'voice from the cloud'...undoubtedly is the climax of Matthew's τὸ ὄραμα [Matt 17:9]."²⁶ Similarly, Donaldson writes, "There can be no doubt that the key and climax to the transfiguration account is to be found in the content of the heavenly proclamation...It is the divine proclamation, with its identification of Jesus as the Son, that overshadows and clarifies

²⁶ Moses, *Matthew's Transfiguration Story*, 138.

all other elements in the narrative.”²⁷ For his part, Luz observes that 17:1–8 forms a chiasm in which

[d]as Zentrum bildet die Gottesstimme (V 5f). Sie ist für Mt offenbar auch sachlich das wichtigste, wie die ausführlich geschilderte Reaktion der Jünger darauf zeigt. Im Unterschied zu den übrigen Synoptikern hat er also klar die *Audition* (nicht die Vision des Verwandelten!) zum Zentrum seiner Geschichte gemacht.²⁸

Like Luz, Davies and Allison also observe that Matt 17:1–8 forms a chiasm with v. 5 at the center²⁹ and observe that the Matthean version of the transfiguration “reserves the experience of awe on the part of the disciples until immediately after the words, ‘Hear ye him’. It is the divine word which is awesome.”³⁰ They also concede that the voice—the structural and thematic center of the passage—“says nothing at all” about Moses.³¹

The foregoing observations undermine the case for Mosaic motifs and allusions. First, in the Matthean transfiguration the voice is central and precipitates the three disciples’ fear, not Jesus’ radiance. By way of contrast, in Exod 34:30 it is Moses’ radiance which precipitates their fear; in Mark 9:6, Jesus’ radiance and the appearance of Moses and Elijah precipitate the disciples’ fear; and in Luke 9:34 the three disciples become afraid as they enter the cloud. In the Matthean version, however, it is the divine voice which declares that Jesus is the beloved Son and commands Peter to remember the prior passion prediction which precipitates the fear. In light of this, Davies and Allison are compelled to provide a most significant concession: “[Beloved/ἀγαπητός] is a title Moses did not have, and the voice in the transfiguration says nothing at all about the law-giver: it passes over him in silence.”³² Nevertheless, they insist on holding to the importance of Moses for the passage, focusing instead on abstracted “themes” and “motifs” apart from concerns for

²⁷ Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 148. Kee also sees the voice as central in the Markan version: “In the text of Mark, the climax of the narrative is not in the metamorphosis of Jesus and the radiance of his clothing, but in the heavenly voice” (“The Transfiguration in Mark: Epiphany or Apocalyptic Vision?” in *Understanding the Sacred Text: Essays in Honor of Morton S. Enslin on the Hebrew Bible and Christian Beginnings* [ed. John Reumann; Valley Forge: Judson, 1972], 139).

²⁸ Luz, *Matthäus*, 2:505. Emphasis original. See also idem, *Theology*, 103–04.

²⁹ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:684.

³⁰ Ibid., 2:703.

³¹ Ibid., 2:687.

³² Ibid.

narrative form and function: “Nonetheless, we remain persuaded that the Mosaic motifs are the key to Matthew’s story, and attempts to give other themes pride of place do not persuade.”³³ In light of their striking concession, however, one wonders if possible Mosaic motifs are in fact a potential red herring. If the voice, the center of the passage, does not concern Moses, should that not raise serious questions about the plausibility of proposed allusions to Moses/Sinai material and the decisive significance of the figure of Moses for the passage? Even if there are allusions to Moses and Sinai traditions, one can certainly fathom other possibilities concerning their narrative function and significance for Jesus’ person and work.

9.2.4 *Other Possibilities*

Although the divine voice in Matt 17:5 has nothing to do with Moses, other figures intrude to obscure the allusion to Gen 22 and the role of the Akedah, as was the case with the baptismal voice. The divine voice of Matt 17:5 is almost identical to the divine voice of 3:17 and consequently most commentators understand each voice in the same way, neglecting Gen 22 and finding allusions to Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1. The supposed significance of Moses for the transfiguration, however, leads commentators to attempt to make a dubious link between Moses and the Suffering Servant. As mentioned in the Introduction, Davies and Allison write, “...it is fitting that Jesus should be presented as the *‘ebed Yahweh* in a pericope so influenced by Mosaic motifs, for Moses was known as the *‘ebed* or *παῖς par excellence* (cf. Exod 14:31; Num 12:7–8).”³⁴

In light of the prior discussion of 3:17 and the Servant, the difficulties involved in making such assertions should be obvious. Again, it will not do to understand every occurrence of עֶבֶד or παῖς as a titular reference calling forth all the Servant Songs and the putative figure of the Suffering Servant itself. Even if the phrase ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα were a reference to Isa 42:1 calling forth Isa 42:1–4, this does not mean that all four Songs or any supposed discrete Servant figure is in view.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 2:702. Moses puts forth several other similar references (Exod 4:10; Deut 3:24; 34:5; Josh 1:1–2, 7, 13, 15; 8:31, 33; 9:24; 11:12, 15; 12:6; 13:8; 14:7; 18:7; 22:2, 4, 5; *Matthew’s Transfiguration Story*, 147).

Most interesting for the exegesis of this passage, however, is that Davies and Allison concede that the empirical author, on a redaction-critical view, has actually weakened or eliminated potential allusions to Servant material in the immediate co-text. With respect to the redactional editing of Mark 9:12b in Matt 17:12 (Jesus' words about Elijah's having already come and prediction of the Son of Man's suffering), Davies and Allison note that as a result of "resolv[ing] the ambiguities of the Markan passage... the clear allusions to Isa 53—πολλὰ πάθη and ἔξουθενήθη—have been passed over."³⁵ The reason? "Evidently the evangelist judged the parallelism between John and Jesus to be of greater moment in this context."³⁶ A better option within a redactional framework would be to say that the evangelist saw no allusion to Isa 53 in Mark 9:12b, as πάσχω and ἔξουθενέω never appear in LXX Isaiah, much less Isa 53, and πολλά is simply too weak to support the allusive weight often ascribed to it. One cannot assert with any confidence whatsoever that the evangelist saw them in the Markan text as allusions to the putative content of Isa 53 MT but decided to eliminate them. In short, there is no reason to find a role for the Servant in 17:1–13.

Other scholars, such as Luz and Donaldson, seeing in the transfiguration the motif of royal enthronement, focus on the purported allusion to Ps 2:7.³⁷ Donaldson asserts that when considering the heavenly voice, one must begin with the phrase οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου as the exegetical starting point.³⁸ The allusion to Ps 2:7, coupled with Jesus' radiance, the appearance of Moses and Elijah, and the heavenly announcement, which corresponds to the common threefold Hellenistic enthronement form of apotheosis, presentation, and enthronement, explains the transfiguration. "Son" Christology therefore dominates Mosaic Christology: "Parallels with Moses, then, do not serve any independent Christological function, but are subordinated to the Son statement. Mosaic typology is not thereby rejected, but it is absorbed into and transcended by the larger pattern of Son-christology."³⁹ Donaldson, however, like many others, has severed ὁ υἱός μου from the adjective ὁ ἀγαπητός,⁴⁰ which, as observed above with regard to the baptismal

³⁵ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:716.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Luz, *Matthäus*, 2:507–09; Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 146–49.

³⁸ Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 146–47.

³⁹ Ibid., 148.

⁴⁰ It is also possible that both "Son" and "Beloved" function as titles, but the import would still be that Jesus as Son is the beloved Son like Isaac.

voice, precludes interpreters from perceiving the significant verbal correspondence with Gen 22:2, 12 and 16. Thus, he contends that if one is not permitted to introduce the element of the cloud from Targumic and pseudepigraphal materials pertaining to Isaac and the Akedah, “it becomes difficult to sustain the interpretation on the strength of the single word ἀγαπητός—especially when neither Matthew nor Mark in their other uses of ἀγαπητός show any awareness of a Gen 22.2 background.”⁴¹ As we have seen, however, it is certainly more than a “single word” which sustains an allusion to the heavenly voice at Matt 3:17 and 17:5, and, as we have seen, the Gospel of Matthew does indeed show awareness of a Gen 22:2 background.⁴²

In his monograph on the transfiguration, A. D. A. Moses finds no allusion to Ps 2:7 in Matt 17:5, given the extreme precariousness of the possible verbal connections, and thus is able to perceive the allusion to Gen 22:2.⁴³ He notes that the strongest syntactical parallel to Matt 17:5 is Gen 22:2, 12, and 16.⁴⁴ Following Liefeld and de Kruif, he further correctly notes that ἀγαπητός generally renders יְחִיד when the child at issue is dead or in extreme danger (Amos 8:10, Zech 12:10, Jer 6:26, Judg 11:34 LXX rec. A).⁴⁵ Since (1) the transfiguration is tied to the passion predictions and (2) Matthew ties “Son of God” and “fear” to the crucifixion (Matt 17:5–6 to 27:54), “it is arguable that an *Akedah*-Gen 22 echo lies behind Mt. 17:5. Moreover, perhaps the ‘mountain’ context

⁴¹ Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 144.

⁴² Given Donaldson’s refusal to consider non-canonical Jewish texts pertaining to the Akedah, it is curious that he is willing to introduce the Targum to Ps 2:7 to explain the presence of ἀγαπητός in Matt 17:5. Following Gundry (*Use of the Old Testament*, 30–31), he notes that “in Tg. Ps 2:2 [*sic*; Ps. 2:7 must be meant] חָבִיב (passive participle of חָבַב, ‘to love’) is used of the Son.” Therefore, “it is at least possible that ἀγαπητός, no less than the rest of the first part of the divine proclamation, reflects Ps 2:7.” The result is predictable: “In any case, a Gen 22/Mount Moriah background for the Mountain of transfiguration must be ruled out” (Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 144). See Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament*, 30–31. Such a judgment simply fails to give sufficient account for the presence of ἀγαπητός, quite apart from the difficulty of finding an allusion to Ps 2:7 in the Matthean text at 3:17 and 17:5. The phrase “it is at least possible” concedes the weakness of Donaldson’s case and amounts to special pleading. Even if an allusion to Ps 2:7 were present in Matt 17:5 (or *mutatis mutandis* 3:17), the Targum to Ps 2:7 may itself involve a response to Christian claims, as Eduard Lohse (“υἱός, υἰοθεσία” *TDNT* 8:362) and Richard Bauckham (*Jude, 2 Peter* [WBC 50; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1983], 207) have contended, rendering Donaldson’s recourse to it problematic.

⁴³ Moses, *Matthew’s Transfiguration Story*, 140–44.

⁴⁴ Moses does not discuss Gen 22:11 and 15, however.

⁴⁵ See also Liefeld, “Theological Motifs,” 176; and Th. C. de Kruif, “The Glory of the Only Son (John i 14),” in *Studies in John* (ed. Jan Nicolaas Sevenster; NovTSup 24; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), 111–23.

of Genesis 22 and Matthew 17 adds to this parallelism.”⁴⁶ Therefore, one of Moses’ conclusions is that “the influence of Genesis 22 on Mt. 17:5 is quite probable.”⁴⁷

Note the language of “influence,” which, like the language of “sources,” generally indicates interpretation has ended—or better, never really began, for the positive identification of a “influence” or “source” depends on integrative interpretation. Moses does nothing more of substance with his finding, speaking in vague terms of “adding to the parallelism” and “influence.” Further, he subordinates Jesus as the obedient Son (Gen 22) to a Servant Christology, and then goes so far as to suggest that Moses was known as “the Beloved of God.”⁴⁸ We have previously dealt with whether the supposed Servant was known as “beloved.” We must here again deal with whether the great lawgiver Moses was known as such, for Moses’ capitalization of the phrase suggests both that “Beloved of God” functioned as a definitive title applicable to personages other than Isaac and also that ἀγαπητός was used with specific reference to Moses. Although Davies and Allison concede that the lawgiver Moses was not known as “beloved,” the modern Moses asserts that Sir 45:1 deems Moses “the Beloved of God.” He does not provide the Greek, which reads, ἡγαπημένον ὑπὸ θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων Μωϋσῆν οὗ τὸ μνημόσυνον ἐν εὐλογίαις. As was the case with certain of Davies’ and Allison’s references to the Servant as “beloved,” here it is not the adjective ἀγαπητός which describes Moses but a participle of ἀγαπάω. There is no decisive evidence here or anywhere that the ancient Moses was interpreted as the “beloved son” like Isaac, as Davies and Allison concede; to suggest otherwise is misleading.

9.2.5 Summary

To sum up: a critical evaluation of relatively recent scholarship on the transfiguration reveals that Mosaic motifs may not play so decisive a role as many think. To this point we have had to clear exegetical driftwood accumulated in recent secondary literature; we now move to a more positive examination of the transfiguration. When one pays proper attention to the narrative location and function of the passage, inquires about its overall coherence and logic and handles the allusive

⁴⁶ Moses, *Matthew’s Transfiguration Story*, 143–44.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 146–47.

possibilities with critical care, however, one can make a most persuasive case that the theme of the passage which deserves pride of place concerns Jesus as a new Isaac and that simplicity actually recommends the actualization of the Akedah. I shall argue that the passage (1) presents Jesus as a new Isaac in service of (2) correcting Peter's *theologia gloriae* with a *theologia crucis*; and that (3) any Sinai/wilderness/"Mosaic" motifs function to present Jesus not as a Moses figure but as the locus of the presence of God, the new tabernacle, the new temple.

9.3 THE MATTHEAN TRANSFIGURATION IN INTRATEXTUAL PERSPECTIVE: SONSHIP, OBEDIENCE, CROSS

Ultimately, the Gospel as a whole (but not to the exclusion of the local co-text) should determine how one understands the Matthean transfiguration account and which aspects of particular potential intertextual references therein ought to be actualized or narcotized. Intertextual dynamics are contingent upon intratextual dynamics.⁴⁹ Since the constitution of a text is logically prior to the intertexts to which it draws the Model Reader's attention, it will be helpful to demonstrate the intratextual connections between the transfiguration and other passages in Matthew, which include the baptism and testing, Peter's confession and rebuke at Caesarea Philippi, Gethsemane, the crucifixion, and the resurrection appearance and ascension.

The voices at the baptism and the transfiguration are nearly identical, thus indicating the linking of the stories:

Matt 3:17: καὶ ἰδοὺ φωνὴ ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν λέγουσα· οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα

Matt 17:5b: καὶ ἰδοὺ φωνὴ ἐκ τῆς νεφέλης λέγουσα· οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα· ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ

As demonstrated previously, the testing narrative is intimately linked to the baptism, and so the Model Reader should not be surprised to find links between the testing and the transfiguration. The most conspicuous connection is the "high mountain" of Matt 4:8 (πάλιν παραλαμβάνει

⁴⁹ See Alkier, "The Bible in Dialogue and the Problem of Hardening in Mark 4: Intertextuality and the Semiotics of Biblical Texts," in Hays, Alkier and Huizenga, *Reading the Bible Intertextually*, 3–21. On the fruitfulness of an intratextual reading preceding an intertextual reading, see idem, "From Text to Intertext: Intertextuality as a Paradigm for Reading Matthew," *HvTSt* 61 (2005): 1–18.

αὐτὸν ὁ διάβολος εἰς ὄρος ὑψηλὸν λίαν) and 17:1 (καὶ . . . παραλαμβάνει ὁ Ἰησοῦς . . . ἀναφέρει αὐτοὺς εἰς ὄρος ὑψηλὸν κατ' ἰδίαν). These are the only loci in which the text deems a mountain “high.” Further, the testing concerns in large measure the concept of sonship, an obvious issue in the transfiguration scene as well.

The testing narrative is also strongly linked with Matt 16:13–28, Peter’s confession and rebuke at Caesarea Philippi, and the latter is in turn linked directly with the transfiguration. (1) The testing concerns sonship; in 16:16 Peter confesses Jesus as the Son of the living God. (2) Jesus rebukes Peter in 16:23 (ὑπάγε ὀπίσω μου, σατανᾶ) with words nearly identical to those with which he rebuked Satan in 4:10 (ὑπάγε, σατανᾶ; the phrase ὀπίσω μου in Matt 16:23 is a call to Peter to cruciform discipleship [cf. 16:24]).⁵⁰ (3) As demonstrated above, the cross casts a long shadow over the testing narrative; such is the case here also in 16:13–28 but in a much more patent manner. (4) Both the testing narrative and 16:13–28 concern the concept of the kingdom (4:8; 16:28).

The incident at Caesarea Philippi and the transfiguration (including Matt 17:9–13) are tied tightly together, which is crucial for understanding the latter.⁵¹ (1) In 16:16 Jesus is the Son of the Living God and in 17:5 the beloved Son. (2) Peter’s confession and rebuke of Jesus (16:16–19, 22–23) parallels Peter’s suggestion of dwellings (17:4). (3) Jesus’ rebuke of Peter (16:22–23) parallels the heavenly voice’s interruption of Peter (17:5). (4) Cross and suffering are emphasized in 16:21–26, while the heavenly voice presents an allusion to Jesus’ cross and suffering in 17:5, if the Model Reader perceives a reference to Akedah, and the suffering of the Son of Man finds explicit mention in 17:12. (5) Resurrection finds mention in 16:21 and in 17:9; consider also Jesus’ command to “rise” in 17:7 (ἐγέρθητε). (6) Jesus is Son of Man in 16:13, 27–28 and in 17:9, 12. (7) The glory of the Son of Man’s coming 16:27–28 is presumably disclosed in Jesus’ radiance (17:2). The exegetical implications are significant, particularly with regard to the parallels between Jesus’ rebuke of Peter and the divine voice’s “rebuke” of Peter.

⁵⁰ In fact, 4:10 is assimilated to 16:23 (ὑπάγε ὀπίσω μου σατανᾶ) in many mss. (C² D L Z 33 M b h l* sy^(s).c.h** sa^{mss} bo^{mss}), showing that later scribes perceived an intratextual connection.

⁵¹ For what follows, see Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:705–06; Moses, *Matthew’s Transfiguration Story*, 114–15; and Luz, *Matthäus*, 2:452–53, 504–05.

Both the transfiguration and the incident at Caesarea Philippi are linked with the parable of the weeds and the wheat and its explanation. Not only is the phrase (ἐκ)λάμπω ὡς ὁ ἥλιος found in both 13:43 and 17:2, but 13:38, 41 and 16:28 concern the Son of Man and the kingdom, and 13:30, 40–43 and 16:27 concern eschatological judgment and reward. The import is that the Gospel “is indicating Jesus’ solidarity with the righteous, with Jesus functioning as a sort of ‘firstfruits’ of the righteous’ resurrection (like Paul in I Cor. 15.23).”⁵²

Thus, the transfiguration looks not only backwards but even forwards beyond the bounds of the Gospel’s story. First, the passage has significant ties to the Passion Narrative. It is strongly linked to Gethsemane.⁵³ (1) In each account, Jesus takes (παραλαμβάνω) the three disciples Peter, James, and John (Matt 17:1; 26:37). (2) Each passage occurs on a mountain (εἰς...ὄρος; 17:1; 26:30). (3) Each mentions Jesus’ face (πρόσωπον; 17:2; 26:39). (4) In 17:3 and Gethsemane Jesus speaks with heavenly personages (Moses and Elijah on one hand, God on the other). (5) In 17:4, Peter addresses Jesus, while in 26:40 Jesus addresses Peter. (6) The voice at the transfiguration deems Jesus the Son (17:5), while Jesus prays to his Father in Gethsemane (26:39, 42). (7) Both passages contain the phrase “while he was still speaking, behold” (ἔτι αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος ἰδοὺ; 17:5; 26:47). (8) Both passages also contain the phrase “falling on the face” (ἔπεσαν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον αὐτῶν; 17:6; 26:39). (9) Each passage contains a form of ἐγείρω (ἐγέρθητε, 17:7; ἐγείρεσθε, 26:46). (10) Gethsemane concerns and affirms the obedience of Jesus to go to the cross (26:36–46), while the transfiguration and the topic of its co-text concern the cross as well (16:21; 17:9, 13).

Even more patent are the verbal and conceptual connections between the transfiguration and crucifixion.⁵⁴ Similarities include (1) “six days” (Matt 17:1) and the “sixth hour” (27:45); (2) the presence of three named onlookers (17:1; 27:55–56); (3) Jesus’ divine sonship (17:5; 27:40, 43, 54); and (4) the presence of ἐφοβήθησαν σφόδρα in these and only these two loci (17:6; 27:54). Allison also points out certain contrasts that an “informed reader” might perceive: (1) Jesus takes others in 17:1, but is taken by others in 27:27. (2) Jesus is elevated on

⁵² Moses, *Matthew’s Transfiguration Story*, 125.

⁵³ On similar links in the Gospel of Mark, see Anthony Kenny, “The Transfiguration and the Agony in the Garden,” *CBQ* 19 [1957]: 444–52.

⁵⁴ See Allison, “Foreshadowing the Passion,” in *Studies in Matthew*, 226–30, and Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:706–07.

a mountain in 17:1 but on a cross in 27:35. (3) The transfiguration is a private epiphany (17:1–2) but the crucifixion a public spectacle (27:39). (4) The transfiguration involves light (17:2) but the crucifixion darkness (27:45). (5) Jesus' garments are radiant at the transfiguration (17:2) but stripped off at the crucifixion (27:28, 35). (6) Jesus is glorified at the transfiguration (17:2–6) but shamed at the crucifixion (27:27–31). (7) Elijah appears in 17:3 but fails to appear in 27:45–50. (8) At the transfiguration Jesus is flanked by two saints of old (17:3) but at the crucifixion by two criminals (27:38). (9) The divine voice confesses Jesus as Son at the transfiguration (17:5) but God (in some sense) abandons Jesus the Son of God at the crucifixion (27:46). (10) The transfiguration involves reverent prostration (17:6) while the crucifixion involves mocking prostration (27:29).

Finally, the transfiguration is tied to the final chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, particularly Matt 28:16–20. Even if the transfiguration is not a misplaced resurrection account, it is certainly linked to the resurrection, both of Jesus himself within the Gospel and of the righteous in the future beyond the bounds of the Gospel. (1) As noted above, Jesus' radiance in 17:2 is similar to Jesus' radiance in 28:3. (2) Προσέρχομαι and λέγω appear in both 17:7 and 28:18: Jesus "comes" and "speaks" to the disciples.⁵⁵ (3) We again find a mountain (17:1; 28:16). (4) We also find reverent prostration mixed with fear or doubt (17:6; 28:17), which Jesus assuages (17:7; 28:18–20).

Thus, the transfiguration is tied to all these passages, through which the threefold cord of sonship, obedience, and cross runs. Three conclusions are of note. First, the potential significance of the figure of Moses for the transfiguration lessens. Second, the significance of the figure of Isaac increases. Third, the Model Reader discovers that the shape of Jesus' mission becomes more sharply defined as the narrative progresses. What was implicit in the baptism and testing becomes explicit at Caesarea Philippi and the high mountain of the transfiguration and thus the import of what it means for Jesus to be the beloved Son becomes clearer.

⁵⁵ For this and what follows, see Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 155.

9.4 THE MATTHEAN TRANSFIGURATION IN INTERTEXTUAL PERSPECTIVE: THE NEW ISAAC

With the foregoing in mind, we are in a proper position to examine and evaluate the Matthean transfiguration account and its intertextual possibilities. Since all readily concede that the heavenly voice is the thematic and structural center of the account, we will begin there and work our way from the inside out.

Having dealt with the form of the voice in our treatment of Matt 3:17, we can here be more succinct. The voice (φωνή) in 17:5 itself comes from the cloud (φωνή ἐκ τῆς νεφέλης) and thus the Model Reader finds slightly less syntactical parallelism with Gen 22 than was found in the baptismal voice; Gen 22:11 and 15 (καὶ ἐκάλεσεν... ἄγγελος κυρίου... ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ) are not in direct play here, as they were in Matt 3:17 (καὶ ἰδοὺ φωνὴ ἐκ τῆς νεφέλης λέγουσα). Nevertheless, the voice of all these verses—Gen 22:11 and 15 and Matt 3:17 and 17:5—remains the divine voice. More importantly, what that voice says in Matt 17:5 includes all that was said in 3:17: οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα. In Mark 1:11 and Luke 3:22, the baptismal voice employs the second person and addresses Jesus directly: “You are my beloved Son” (σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός). In Matt 3:17, however, the voice uses the near demonstrative pronoun and the third person of the verb: “This is...” (οὗτός ἐστιν, “This is...”). Thus, the divine voice at the Matthean baptism matches the divine voice at the Matthean transfiguration, and thus the Model Reader may be every bit as confident that an allusion to Gen 22 is present here at the transfiguration. Thus, the Model Reader finds no allusion to Ps 2:7. Again, finding an allusion to Ps. 2:7 in ὁ υἱός μου cleaves the phrase from its adjective, ὁ ἀγαπητός, and leads commentators to miss the extensive verbal correspondence with Gen 22.

What, then, of ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα? As argued previously, many options are possible, including Isa 42:1 and thus Isa 42:1–4 in Matt 12:18–21. If Isa 42:1 is intended, given the passage’s links to 28:16–20 and the presence of Isa 8:23/9:1–9:1/9:2 in Matt 4:12–16, this phrase in Matt 17:5 would function in service of the Matthean motif of Gentile inclusion to which the death of the beloved Son Jesus will ultimately lead. The παῖς of Isa 42:1–4 (but not the modern metaconcept of the “Suffering Servant”!) and the Isaac of the Akedah find their ultimate fulfillment in their intertextual fusion in the Matthean Jesus, whose life and sacrificial

murder (Matt 12:14) announces and brings κρίσις to the nations (Matt 12:18–21).

What, then, of ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ? We noted above that commentators, finding an allusion to Deut 18:15 here, believe that the divine command involves paying attention to Jesus' ethical teaching in a general sense. If there is no allusion to Gen 18:15 here, as argued above, what might be the import of the words? Here it is most helpful to consider the narrative co-text. The Model Reader observes that the most recent words of Jesus involved a passion prediction and concerned the necessity of the cross (16:21–28). It is this to which the divine voice refers, and thus helps confirm an allusion therein to the Akedah. Although elsewhere they otherwise affirm the generic, ethical understanding of the words, Davies and Allison write, "The command to hear or obey Jesus—directed to the disciples, not Moses and Elijah—probably pertains not solely to the future ('listen to him from now on') but also looks back to the episode at Caesarea Philippi, where Jesus' words about suffering were not easily digested."⁵⁶ If that is so, then it makes good sense for the Model Reader to hear echoes of the Akedah in the divine voice. Chrysostom, for his part, found a reference to 16:21–28 in the heavenly voice of 17:5 as well: "'Hear ye Him.' So that although He choose to be crucified, you are not to oppose Him."⁵⁷

Thus, far from being a concise but substantive allusion to Deut 18:15 with general import, the words may simply mean what they mean on their face: listen to him! Peter is to remember and heed what Jesus said about the necessity of his death and discipleship in Matt 16:21–28. Whatever else its import, Peter's attempt to construct tabernacles (σκηναί) parallels his earlier refusal to accept Jesus' passion prediction. Again, the two sections (16:13–17:13) are closely related and reflect each other in their structural and thematic parallels. Luz notes that 16:13–28 is a "diptych" which shows "that the Son of God goes to the passion in obedience to his Father."⁵⁸ Davies and Allison believe that 16:13–17:13 functions as a double diptych, as it were: in 16:13–20 and 17:1–8, Jesus is confessed as Son of God, while in 16:21–28 and 17:9–13 Jesus explains that the Son of Man must suffer. Davies and Allison therefore write, "If the transfiguration presents Jesus as the glorified

⁵⁶ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:703.

⁵⁷ Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 56.5 (trans. Prevost, *NPNF*¹ 10:348). Cited by Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:703 n. 86.

⁵⁸ Luz, "Matthean Christology," 95.

Son of God, the sequel announces the suffering of the Son of man. This mirrors 16:13–23, where the confession of Jesus as Son of God and the promise of his church's triumph are followed by a passion prediction concerning the Son of man (16:21–23).⁵⁹ On structural grounds, then, we may infer that just as Peter's confession of Jesus as "son of the living God" (16:20) involves suffering and death unrecognized at that point by Peter, so too does God's "confession" of Jesus as beloved Son of God involve suffering and death unrecognized by Peter.⁶⁰

In fact, in comparison with the Markan and Lukan versions,⁶¹ one sees that the Matthean version of the transfiguration (vv. 4–5 in particular) emphasizes Peter's role and thus the parallels between Matt 16:13–28 and 17:1–13. If the Model Reader hears echoes of the Akedah in the divine voice, then in each section Peter shows himself possessed of a *theologia gloriae* and confronted with a *theologia crucis*. In 16:15, Simon Peter declares that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, upon which confession Jesus declares Peter blessed because Jesus' Father revealed (ἀπεκάλυψέν!) that truth to Peter. Jesus then asserts the victory of the Church, gives Peter the keys and adjures the disciples to silence. In 16:21 the Model Reader encounters a major transition in the narrative and also in the explicit content of Jesus' teaching: "From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." Note, however, that whereas Jesus "began to show his disciples" (ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς δεικνύνειν τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ) that he had to suffer in 16:21, in 16:22 Peter "began to rebuke him" (ἤρξατο ἐπιτιμᾶν αὐτῷ). Jesus then tells Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things" (16:23). The Model Reader thus observes a pattern of misunderstood revelation followed by correction.

The Model Reader finds the same pattern in 17:4–5. Jesus is transfigured in a most glorious fashion in v. 2 (and, as shown above, the verse points back to 13:43, which concerns the resurrection of the righteous,

⁵⁹ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:717.

⁶⁰ As Levenson observes, the appellation "beloved Son" should be heard as an omen of death (*Death and Resurrection*, 200).

⁶¹ Again, we are not undertaking a redactional analysis of the Gospel of Matthew. Comparisons, however, help interpreters see what is there in the text. The following points would stand whether the Gospels of Mark and Luke were written well before or even centuries after Matthew.

and forward to 28:3, the appearance of the resurrected Jesus). Moses and Elijah appear in v. 3. Peter then states, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make (ποιήσω) three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” (17:4). Unlike the Markan or Lukan versions, in which Peter says “Let us make” (ποιήσωμεν), with the first person singular future indicative ποιήσω the Matthean version focuses squarely on Peter alone and his declared will, thus producing a closer parallel with the incident at Caesarea Philippi. The beginning of v. 5 interrupts Peter’s speech directly, suggesting the voice from the cloud is a corrective to Peter’s suggestion: “While he was still speaking (ἔτι αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος), suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!’”⁶² The divine voice, in alluding to Gen 22, is reminding Peter of the necessity of Jesus’ sacrificial death, even in the face of Jesus’ radiance. It rebukes Peter as much as Jesus did in 16:21–23. At both Caesarea Philippi and the scene of the transfiguration, Peter’s *theologia gloriae* is countered by a *theologia crucis*.

One should not be too quick to condemn Peter for a fascination with the weight of Jesus’ glory, however, for the transfiguration of Jesus is a proleptic disclosure of both the resurrection and Parousia. Not only does Matt 17:2 point back to 13:43 and forward to 28:3, but the language of ἐγέρθητε καὶ μὴ φοβεῖσθε in 17:7 ties the passage firmly to the resurrection. In 28:5 an angel and in 28:10 the resurrected Jesus adjure the women at the tomb not to fear.⁶³ That Jesus’ radiance at the transfiguration concerns both the Parousia and resurrection is shown by the link between 16:28 and 17:1–2. In the former, Jesus concludes his brief discourse on suffering and discipleship with shocking words: “Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.” This saying has often been taken as evidence that the historical Jesus predicted

⁶² Luke, interestingly, has ταῦτα δὲ αὐτοῦ λέγοντος (9:34a). Mark has no such phrase (9:7). Donaldson rightly observes that the phrase ἔτι αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος “sets in sharp juxtaposition Peter’s inadequate response and the voice from heaven; Peter’s speech is actually broken off by the heavenly interpretation of the event” (*Jesus on the Mountain*, 150).

⁶³ Moreover, noting the emphasis on resurrection in 17:9–13, Moses writes, “only on this occasion is it implied that Jesus permits his disciples to speak—in the future after the final resurrection. In view of this it is arguable that one key to the interpretation of the transfiguration may lie in the resurrection” (*Matthew’s Transfiguration Story*, 151).

that the eschaton would come relatively soon. Yet in its context in each synoptic Gospel—in the Gospel of Matthew in particular—it is fulfilled in a proleptic but very real way in the transfiguration.

The first clue is the explicit temporal link between 16:28 and the transfiguration provided by 17:1: “And after six days...” Further, 16:28 says that there are “some standing here” (τινες τῶν ὧδε ἐστῶτων) who will see the Son coming in his kingdom. Jesus is speaking expressly to his disciples (16:24); the “some” thus indicates a subgroup among them. This is precisely what we find in the transfiguration: “...Jesus took Peter and James and John...by themselves (κατ’ ἰδίαν)” (17:1). Thus, the “some” of 16:28 turns out to be precisely Peter, James and John (17:1). Moreover, Jesus is transfigured expressly “before them” (ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν). Finally, 16:28 concerns the coming of the Son of Man—Jesus—in his kingdom, and in 17:2 Jesus shines like the righteous will shine in the kingdom (13:43). These observations lead to the conclusion that the transfiguration of Jesus fulfills Jesus’ words in 16:28.

What about other details in the passage, however? Peter’s suggestion to build three tents has long baffled commentators. Davies and Allison maintain that “no one has yet put forward a convincing theological or literary explanation for Peter’s remarks about booths”⁶⁴ and that they themselves “have not been able to come to any decision on the matter.”⁶⁵ Donaldson, in critiquing explanations of Peter’s suggestion to build three tents which center either on the biblical tabernacle of Exod 33:7–11, 40:34–38, and Num 9:15–23 or on the idea of an eschatologically-oriented feast of Tabernacles, like other commentators, largely surrenders:

The most awkward factor for the modern interpreter is the mention of three tents. For if the conceptual framework behind Peter’s suggestion was the booths of the messianic feast, one would have expected booths for the disciples as well. The tents would be easier to explain if there were only one (Tent of Meeting) or six (eschatological Feast of Booths). The fact that they are proposed in the transfiguration narrative only for heavenly beings suggests that we have here an idiosyncratic detail whose meaning has to do with Peter’s mistaken desire either to prolong the experience or to place Moses and Elijah on an equal level with Jesus.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:692.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 2:699.

⁶⁶ Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 146.

In light of the divine voice and its reference to Gen 22, however, the best explanation is perhaps to see Peter's error as concerning both without considering his offer of tentmaking merely an "idiosyncratic detail." In light of the connections between Matt 16:28 and the transfiguration, the Model Reader concludes that Peter assumes the eschatological kingdom has arrived, and since "it could be that Peter's proposal presupposes that the saints in heaven have dwellings [cf. 1 Enoch 39:4–8, 41:2; 71:16; John 14:2; 2 Enoch 61:23; *T. Abr.* 20:14 rec. A],"⁶⁷ Peter proposes making dwellings for them. The word σκηναί need not concern either the one wilderness tabernacle or the one heavenly tabernacle or temple, for σκηνή often simply means "tent" in the LXX (e.g., every occurrence in Genesis). Heavenly dwellings for the heavenly three is thus a good interpretive option, especially since in the Matthean version of the transfiguration Peter's suggestion is not the result of somnolent confusion (as in Luke 9:32–33) or raw fear (as in Mark 9:6). The story does not imply Peter's suggestion is categorically wrong. Rather, the heavenly voice suggests that it is ill-timed; before Jesus enters into ultimate glory, he must go the way of the cross.

The cloud concerns the eschaton as well. The voice comes from a "bright cloud" which "overshadowed them" (ἰδοὺ νεφέλη φωτεινὴ ἐπεσκίασεν αὐτούς, presumably Jesus, Moses and Elijah). This is most likely an allusion to Exod 40:35, the only verse in the LXX which contains both νεφέλη and ἐπισκιάζω: "And Moses was not able to enter into the tabernacle of testimony (τὴν σκηνὴν τοῦ μαρτυρίου), because the cloud overshadowed it (ὅτι ἐπεσκίαζεν ἐπ' αὐτὴν ἡ νεφέλη), and the tabernacle was filled with the glory of the Lord (καὶ δόξης κυρίου ἐπλήσθη ἡ σκηνή)." Davies and Allison note that the description of the cloud as "bright" (φωτεινός) makes a reference to the Shekinah "unmistakable."⁶⁸ Further, they note that texts such as Isa 4:5 LXX⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:700.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:701.

⁶⁹ Isa 4:5 LXX: "And he will have come, and it will be as regards every place of the mountain of Zion, and the cloud will shadow (σκιάζει) all things around it by day, both as smoke and as fiery light burning in the night, and he (κύριος from Isa 4:4 LXX; "it" if the mountain of Zion itself is the antecedent) will be covered in all glory" (my translation). Liefeld also emphasizes Isa 4:5: "It is noteworthy that reference is made to a mountain (Zion), to dwelling places, to the glory of God, and to the cloud covering. Several motifs of the transfiguration are thus present, and reference is made both back to the Shekinah glory and ahead to a time of protected rest" ("Theological Motifs," 169).

and 2 Macc 2:8⁷⁰ point to the expectation “that the cloud of the wilderness would return at the consummation.” Thus, “we may have here [in Matt 17:5] an eschatological motif: the Shekinah has once again appeared.”⁷¹ This reading coheres well with the eschatological focus of 17:2 and confirms our largely proleptically eschatological reading of the transfiguration. The voice therefore functions to restrain Peter’s eschatological enthusiasm by reminding him by means of an allusion to the Akedah that Jesus must go the way of the cross.

That the text presents an allusion to Exod 40:35 and the Shekinah need not lead simply to the brute inference that Jesus is a new Moses superior to old Moses. However true that may or may not be, it seems the more precise point is that Jesus himself is now the locus of God’s presence, a new temple.⁷² This suggestion is certainly plausible in view of Matt 1:23 and 28:20: Jesus is the bearer and mediator of God’s presence. Thus, Peter’s impetuous proposal of making dwellings for the heavenly three is countered by the divine answer that in Jesus the one heavenly tabernacle is made present. It is here significant that the Matthean text strongly emphasizes the singular figure of Jesus in 17:8: “And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone” (οὐδένα εἶδον εἰ μὴ αὐτὸν Ἰησοῦν μόνον). Striking also is Exod 40:35, in which it is related that Moses could not enter the tabernacle because the cloud “overshadowed it” (ἐπεσκίαζεν ἐπ’ αὐτήν/וַיִּכַּחַשׁ עָלֶיהָ) and the glory of the LORD filled it. But here, in the presence of Jesus, Moses and Elijah can indeed enter it.

What, then, of Moses and Elijah? Scholarship has provided a multitude of suggestions.⁷³ Three suggestions in particular commend themselves when one takes the total Matthean narrative into consideration.

⁷⁰ “And then the Lord will disclose these things, and the glory of the Lord and the cloud will appear, as they were shown in the case of Moses, and as Solomon asked that the place should be specially consecrated.”

⁷¹ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:701.

⁷² Liefeld suggests that the cloud is the new tabernacle: “The fact that it appears in the narrative immediately after Peter’s comment about the booths may suggest that the cloud functions as the heavenly tabernacle. It would then constitute part of the divine reply to Peter’s suggestion about the tabernacles: God providing his own ‘tabernacle,’ the cloud. Thus the cloud of the Shekinah glory which in the wilderness *accompanied* the tabernacle now *becomes* the tabernacle” (“Theological Motifs,” 170, emphasis original; see also Moses, *Matthew’s Transfiguration Story*, 134, 160). Liefeld’s comments move in the right direction, but the point is that the cloud is centered on Jesus, indicating that Jesus himself is the locus of God’s presence.

⁷³ See Liefeld, “Theological Motifs,” 171–74; Moses, *Matthew’s Transfiguration Story*, 36–42; and Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:697–99.

First, as many exegetes in Christian tradition have suggested, Moses and Elijah may represent the law and the prophets,⁷⁴ a proposal that explains the priority of Moses in the Matthean sequence⁷⁵ and would cohere well with the repeated Matthean phrase “the law and the prophets” (7:12; 22:40; cf. 5:15 [“law or the prophets” but also 11:13 [“For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John came”]]). In particular, in 5:17–20 the Gospel presents Jesus himself as the one who fulfills both the law and the prophets.

Second, although eschewing the first possibility, Luz suggests, “Wie schon in der Tradition sind sie einfach Vertreter der Himmelswelt.”⁷⁶ This suggestion, in all its possible permutations, has great merit in light of our eschatological understanding of 17:2. As Liefeld notes, Moses was buried by God (Deut 34:6) and, in Jewish tradition, his body was assumed into heaven, while Elijah was translated without suffering death (2 Kgs 2:1–12).⁷⁷

Third, it is indeed possible that Moses and Elijah are present because each met with God on Sinai/Horeb. This need not emphasize the figure of Moses and thus Jesus as a new Moses, however. Rather, the emphasis concerns the mountain of Sinai, on which the Shekinah dwelt, from which God’s voice comes. The point of emphasis is then not Moses but rather the presence of God, now centered on Jesus.

In addition to these previously proposed options, I would like to offer a suggestion about the symbolic significance of Moses and Elijah in the transfiguration story, which, to my knowledge, has not been made before. My proposal builds upon the idea that that Moses and Elijah respectively represent the law and the prophets and concerns the universality of the gospel message in the Matthean vision. In his mission to the Jews and his announcing of a mission to the Gentiles

⁷⁴ See Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 56.1; and Sigfred Pedersen, “Die Proklamation Jesu als des eschatologischen Offenbarungsträgers (Mt 17:1–13),” *NovT* 17 (1975): 241–64.

⁷⁵ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:698.

⁷⁶ Luz, *Matthäus*, 2:510.

⁷⁷ Liefeld, “Theological Motifs,” 171. See also Thrall, “Elijah and Moses,” who believes the point is to show that the Markan Jesus is superior to Moses and Elijah in that the former was resurrected while the latter were only translated. See also Boobyer, *St Mark and the Transfiguration Story*, 70–76, who contends that Moses and Elijah represent the Parousia; and Chilton, *God in Strength: Jesus’ Announcement of the Kingdom* (Freistadt: Plöchl, 1979), 251–74, who argues that Moses and Elijah are “immortals” who have not tasted death and thus are supposed to appear at the end with the Messiah (cf. 2 Esdras/4 Ezra 6:25–26). As mentioned previously, Liefeld suggests that Moses functions typologically, while Elijah functions eschatologically (“Theological Motifs,” 173).

(Matt 28:16–20), the Matthean Jesus fulfills the roles of Moses as the great lawgiver to the Jews as well as the role of Elijah, who had a ministry in Gentile territory (1 Kgs 17:8–24). This would cohere well with the Matthean emphasis on Gentile inclusion (4:12–16; 12:17–21; 21:43; 28:16–20), especially if ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα in 17:5 alludes to Isa 42:1 and thus Isa 42:1–4 in Matt 12:18–21.

9.5 SUMMARY

What, then, may we conclude about the transfiguration and, in particular, the role of the Akedah therein? First, the Model Reader finds good reasons for seeing an allusion to Gen 22 in Matt 17:5 and hearing echoes of the Akedah. (1) The verbal, syntactical parallelism between Matt 17:5 and Gen 22 is simply stronger, “louder” in terms of volume than any other routinely suggested allusive possibilities. Gen 22 is the most economical solution to the intertextual question. (2) The passage is tied to others in the Gospel of Matthew which concern Jesus’ sonship, obedience and death. (3) The immediate narrative co-text concerns explicit mortal threat, particularly Jesus’ words about his suffering, sacrificial death and resurrection (16:21; 17:9, 12). (4) The parallels between and connection of 16:13–28 and 17:1–13 suggest that the ominous note of the Akedah should be heard as a death omen in the divine voice of Matt 17:5. If the Model Reader hears echoes of the Akedah in 17:5, Peter’s *theologia gloriae* is then corrected with a *theologia crucis*, the same pattern as in 16:13–28.

Second, the structural and thematic centrality of the heavenly voice indicates the importance of the Akedah for the interpretation of the passage, whatever other allusions may be present. (Again, one typology need not exclude another.) Any allusions to Mosaic, Sinaitic, and wilderness texts function not to present Jesus as a new Moses. Rather, they present the supremacy of Jesus himself as the decisive locus of God’s presence.

CHAPTER TEN

ENDURANCE UNTO DEATH: THE PASCHAL PASSION OF THE BELOVED SON

10.1 OBEDIENCE, PASSOVER AND THE AKEDAH

The Matthean Model Reader has encountered significant evidence that the Gospel intends the evocation of the figure of Isaac. Further verbal and thematic indications in the Matthean Passion Narrative confirm what no longer needs much in the way of confirmation: the Gospel evokes a poignant Isaac typology as a major component of its Christological presentation. In the Passion Narrative in general the Model Reader finds that the Matthean Jesus parallels the Isaac of Jewish tradition in terms of thematic correspondence. Both go willingly to their sacrificial deaths at the season of Passover at the hands of their respective fathers for redemptive purposes, and both their deaths are associated with the institution of the temple. In terms of verbal, syntactical correspondence, the Gethsemane and arrest sequence presents several striking allusions to Gen 22 roundly neglected by scholarship as well as the theme of dominical obedience. The Model Reader thus finds further confirmation of previous verbal and thematic references to Isaac and the Akedah. This chapter will examine (1) the general phenomenon of Jesus' unyielding obedience and actual control of events in the Matthean Passion Narrative; (2) the association of Jesus' sacrificial death with Passover; and (3) the significant allusions to Gen 22 and thematic coherence with the Akedah in the Matthean Gethsemane and arrest sequence.

10.2 THE PASSION NARRATIVE AND THE OBEDIENCE OF THE MATTHEAN JESUS

Throughout the Passion Narrative, the Gospel of Matthew presents a Jesus of unwavering obedience. As Donald Senior writes,

At its most basic level, Matthew's passion story is a story of fidelity... The proof of Jesus' fidelity and the final expression of his obedience to God's

will is demonstrated in the passion... Jesus' fidelity in the passion demonstrates that every fiber of his being is in harmony with God... Such singular fidelity ultimately flows from the very identity of Jesus as the Son of God, the unique revealer of God to Israel and the world.¹

Further, his obedience consists not only in his acceptance of his divine sacrificial mission but in his actual control of the events of the passion. He is not simply resigned to his inevitable fate as if his obedience consisted in a mere psychological embrace of his inexorable suffering and death, an inner resolution to accept the inevitable. Rather, he actively orchestrates events to bring about his sacrificial death. In addition to the scene of the Lord's Supper and the Gethsemane and arrest sequence the Model Reader finds that Jesus' willingness to endure his divinely ordained sacrificial death is shown with particular clarity in Jesus' passion prediction at the very beginning of the Passion Narrative (Matt 26:1–5), his trial before the high priest and his crucifixion.

The very beginning of the Matthean Passion Narrative illustrates not only that Jesus is willing to go the way of sacrificial death appointed for him, but that he in fact is the one in control of its events, as Nils Dahl observes: "A saying of Jesus is the signal that sets the whole event [of the passion] in motion."² In Matt 26:1 the Model Reader detects a major transition in the narrative: καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς πάντας τοὺς λόγους τούτους, indicating that the time for lessons is over, save one lesson to be taught by example, not words: that of Jesus' obedience in death.³ Having concluded "all these words" (26:1), Jesus now informs his disciples, "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified" (26:2). Immediately after this in 26:3–5, the narrator states, "Then (τότε) the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. But they said, 'Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar (θόρυβος) among the people.'" The irony becomes clear later: the leaders do in fact have Jesus executed during the

¹ Senior, *Passion of Jesus*, 164–66.

² Dahl, "The Passion Narrative in Matthew," in *The Interpretation of Matthew* (ed. Graham Stanton; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 60. Martin Dibelius likewise notes, "Vor allem aber zeichnet sich die Passion des Matthäus, und nur sie, durch Momente höchster christologischer Bedeutsamkeit aus, die Jesus auch im Leiden als den mit Vollmacht ausgerüsteten Gottessohn zeigen, der seines Schicksals Herr ist" (*Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* [Tübingen: Mohr {Siebeck}, 1959], 198; see 198–200).

³ Senior, *Passion*, 50.

feast and in the course of doing so almost precipitate a riot (θόρυβος) among the people (27:24). The word τότε, which is the fulcrum of the sequence of vv. 1–2 and 3–5, is highly significant: only after Jesus gives his final passion prediction can the murderous conspiracy transpire, as if Jesus is giving permission; Jesus' version of events will come to pass, while the conspirators' will fail in its details.⁴

Jesus' control of events during the Passion Narrative is also seen in the trial before the High Priest. Gerhardsson notes that Jesus, in his trial before the High Priest, deliberately seals his own fate. The "evasive rejoinder" of σὺ εἶπας (26:64) in response to the High Priest's question as a confession is "indirect"; it is actually the High Priest who has uttered blasphemy:⁵

This evasive rejoinder means that Jesus has both answered and not answered. He has extricated himself from the High Priest's snare. He is still free. But just at this point he takes the initiative himself and says something that he was not forced to say. With spontaneity and sovereignty he allows his evasive answer to be followed by bold words of confession: "But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of Heaven." He thus presents to the High Priest better weapons than he could have dreamed of. Jesus can now be condemned on the basis of his own confession before the members of the Council. There is no further need of witnesses.⁶

In short, Jesus seals his own fate with deliberation, somewhat like Socrates, lending a helping hand to the prosecution.

Jesus' obedience and willingness to undergo sacrificial death is also seen in the crucifixion itself. The Matthean Jesus, the Model Reader rightly assumes, did indeed have the power to come down from the cross had he so desired: would nails suffice to hold fast the one who has shown himself master over sickness, demons and nature (cf., *inter alia*, Matt 8:16 and 14:13–33)? Senior writes:

Matthew clearly makes this issue of "fidelity" a major motif of the concluding scenes of the passion. As he hangs on the cross Jesus is once more "tempted" by a procession of taunters: "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross..." (27:40). "He trusts in God, let God deliver him

⁴ See Frank J. Matera, *Passion Narratives and Gospel Theologies: Interpreting the Synoptics Through Their Passion Stories* (New York: Paulist, 1986), 87–88.

⁵ Gerhardsson, "Confession and Denial before Men: Observations on Matt 26:57–27:2," *JSNT* (1981): 57.

⁶ *Ibid.*

now, if he desires him; for he said, 'I am the Son of God'" (27:43). But just as Jesus had rejected the attempts of Satan to turn him aside from the way of fidelity so Jesus' silent commitment to the cross turns back the taunts of his opponents.⁷

Jesus' control of events in the Matthean Passion Narrative serves to underscore his obedience. Like the Maccabean martyrs, he did in fact have a real choice. He could have avoided his most painful and shameful sacrificial death if he had willed so, but, as the beloved Son like Isaac (3:17; 17:5), in obedience he submits his will to that of his Father. Thus he goes his way to sacrificial death, even orchestrating events to bring it about, as if he were erecting the cross himself, as Josephus' Isaac erected the altar himself. Jesus' control of events and willingness to endure sacrificial death are seen with particular clarity in two passages in the Passion Narrative with strong echoes of Akedah, namely the Last Supper and the Gethsemane and arrest sequence.

10.3 THE PASSOVER SACRIFICE OF THE BELOVED SON

On the way to the Passion Narrative, the Matthean Model Reader has encountered significant verbal and thematic clues that point to a significant typological role for the figure of Isaac in the Gospel. Jesus' conception and birth are related in terms of Isaac's; Jesus has been deemed "my beloved son" twice and "my beloved" once; his Father wills his sacrificial death; he is willing to undergo it at Jerusalem, the ancient site of the Akedah. The Model Reader thus experiences no surprise but rather a sense of confirmation in finding Jesus' sacrificial death inextricably linked with Passover, as it was in the tradition.

The entire Passion Narrative is set in the context of Passover (Matt 26:2). The Last Supper therein is unquestionably set within the symbolic matrix of the Passover meal, but it also transcends it, whatever the precise historical reality regarding the historical Supper and development of Eucharistic traditions prior to the composition of the Gospel of

⁷ Senior, *Passion*, 165. So also Luz: "The high priests join in the mockery of Jesus, as do a number of random bystanders and the rebels crucified with him. They mock him in the same way that evil figures in the Bible mock men of righteousness (cf. Psalm 22:7–9; Pss. Sol. 2:18). But the man of righteousness—God's Son, Jesus—chooses not to descend from the cross, remaining instead obedient to God's will (27:38–43)" (*Theology*, 136).

Matthew. In Matt 26:17 and 19 the Model Reader finds clear indications the Matthean version of the Lord's Supper is a Passover meal:

τῇ δὲ πρώτῃ τῶν ἁζύμων προσῆλθον οἱ μαθηταὶ τῷ Ἰησοῦ λέγοντες· ποῦ θέλεις ἐτοιμάσωμέν σοι φαγεῖν τὸ πάσχα; [...] καὶ ἐποίησαν οἱ μαθηταὶ ὡς συνέταξεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἡτοίμασαν τὸ πάσχα.

Further, the phrase ὀψίας δὲ γενομένης in 26:20 also indicates the forthcoming meal is the Passover meal; likewise, the appearance of this phrase in 14:15 and 14:23 suggests that night has fallen.⁸ Thus, "The reader should think of the Passover meal, which was eaten after sunset."⁹

Yet it is not simply another Passover meal. It is Jesus' Passover meal and the lack of certain routine elements of the Passover meal in the Matthean account suggests that Jesus' death and ritual replaces the sacrifice of the Passover lamb and the repetition of the ritual of the Lord's Supper is to replace the Passover ritual going forward. Above all, the figure of Jesus is central to this meal. Frank Matera notes, "The relationship between Jesus' death and the feast of Passover is not accidental; it is part of God's plan. Just as the events of Passover once brought salvation, so Jesus' death will effect a new and definitive redemption."¹⁰ Dahl goes even further in suggesting that it is somewhat inaccurate and misleading to call the Matthean version of Jesus' Supper a Passover meal: "According to Matthew what is to be prepared for is not the eating of the Jewish Passover lamb but the first paschal feast of the new covenant; Jesus' *kairos* is near and he will celebrate Passover with his disciples in order to institute the Eucharist."¹¹ Along these lines, Luz notes that at the meal Jesus takes, blesses and breaks not the ἄζυμον but bread (ἄρτον). Neither the lamb, nor the bitter herbs, nor the Matzoh, nor the Passover haggadah nor the Hallel psalms finds mention. Thus, Luz concludes that the Matthean Jesus "vollzieht einen neuen Ritus,"¹² and readers

mußten den Eindruck bekommen, daß Matthäus bzw. Jesus, von dem er erzählt, sich für den Ablauf einer Passahmahlzeit außerordentlich wenig

⁸ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 3:460; Jeremias, *Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 38–40.

⁹ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 3:460.

¹⁰ Matera, *Passion Narratives*, 87.

¹¹ Dahl, "Passion Narrative," 62.

¹² Luz, *Matthäus*, 4:102.

interessieren. Auch in bezug auf die Deutung stimmt das: Weder direkt noch indirekt klingt irgend etwas von der besonderen Bedeutung des jüdischen Passah an.¹³

The Matthean Jesus ignores essential aspects of a traditional Passover meal¹⁴ with the import that “Jesus benutze den Rahmen des Passahmahls für etwas ganz anderes.”¹⁵ More precisely, Jesus’ death and this ritual of the Eucharist replace that of the lamb and the Passover meal. The Passover and its elements are an important symbolic matrix ultimately upended and transcended by the Matthean Jesus.

The Model Reader sees Jesus’ centrality and the transformation of a Passover ritual into a celebration of his sacrifice clearly in Matt 26:17–19. The disciples ask not simply about a location to prepare the Passover meal. They come to Jesus (τῷ Ἰησοῦ) and ask ποῦ θέλεις ἐτοιμάσωμέν σοι φαγεῖν τὸ πάσχα. Luz observes that the phrase τῷ Ἰησοῦ “betont ebenso wie das zugefügte σοι, daß es um Jesus geht und um sein Passah.”¹⁶ Further, in Matt 26:18 Jesus’ “time” (καιρός)—that is, his sacrificial death—finds mention as the occasion for the meal.¹⁷ The Matthean Jesus is also in full control of the situation: his disciples ask him about the location for his eating of the Passover on the very first day (τῇ δὲ πρώτῃ τῶν ἁζύμων; Thursday morning or afternoon, 14 Nisan) which leaves precious little time to make arrangements (26:17). Jesus replies in 26:18 by issuing a command to his disciples, instructing them to find a “certain man” (τὸν δεῖν) and simply tell him—not ask him, nor order him, as if either permission or disobedience were even within the realm of possibility—that Jesus and his disciples will in fact arrive to eat the Passover at his house (εἶπατε αὐτῷ· ὁ διδάσκαλος

¹³ Ibid., 4:103–04.

¹⁴ Luz mentions *m. Pes.* 10:1 and 5. The former concerns the four cups of wine, three of which would find no mention in Matthew. The latter concerns the judgment of Gamaliel, whom the Mishnah records as saying: “Whosoever has not said [the verses concerning] these three things at Passover has not fulfilled his obligation. And these are they: Passover, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs... In every generation a man must so regard himself as if he came forth himself out of Egypt... Therefore we are bound to give thanks, to praise, to glorify, to honour, to exalt, to extol, and to bless him who wrought all these wonders for our fathers and for us. He brought us out from bondage to freedom, from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning to a Festival-day, and from darkness to great light, and from servitude to redemption; so let us say before him the Hallelujah [i.e., the Hallel Psalms]” (trans. Danby).

¹⁵ Luz, *Matthäus*, 4:104.

¹⁶ Ibid., 4:80.

¹⁷ Ibid., 4:81–82.

λέγει·...πρὸς σὲ ποιῶ τὸ πάσχα μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν μου).¹⁸ Jesus simply states what will be; his word makes it so.

Jesus' knowledge of and control of events is also seen in his revealing of his forthcoming betrayal (Matt 26:21–25) and indeed the identity of the betrayer himself (26:25) without fleeing or complaining but rather with the instituting of the ritual. The scene proceeds apace as if a traitor's presence were a matter of no gravity or consequence.

Finally, the centrality of Jesus is seen in the words over the bread and cup in 26:26 and 28: τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου... τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης.¹⁹ What is more, here the Model Reader finds a marked sacrificial emphasis. Although speaking of the historical Jesus, Jeremias' opinion holds for the Matthean text as well: in referring to his own body and blood, Jesus "überträgt also Termini der Opfersprache auf sich... Dabei setzen beide Nomina [κρέας-αἷμα/σάρξ-αἷμα/σῶμα-αἷμα] je für sich die Tötung voraus, die Fleisch und Blut trennt. Mit anderen Worten: Jesus redet von sich als Opfer."²⁰ The word over the cup in particular is strongly sacrificial; the participle ἐκχυννόμενον is "a sacrificial word which connotes a violent death²¹ and in connexion with Passover, recalls the slaughtered paschal lamb."²² That the word over the cup concerns Passover and sacrifice is no surprise, for it likely alludes directly to Exod 24:8 LXX:

Matt 26:28: τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυννόμενον εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν

Exod 24:8: Μωσῆς...εἶπεν ἰδοὺ τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης ἧς διέθετο κύριος πρὸς ὑμᾶς περὶ πάντων τῶν λόγων τούτων

¹⁸ The Markan and Lukan versions involve questions: ποῦ ἐστιν τὸ κατάλυμα [Mark adds μου] ὅπου τὸ πάσχα μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν μου φάγω (Luke 22:11//Mark 14:14).

¹⁹ The adjective καινῆς is found in A C D W 074 f^{1,13} ℳ latt sy sa bo Ir^{at}, while its omission is supported by the early mss. p³⁷ and p^{45vid} (3d or 4th and 4th century, respectively), as well as N and B, among others. Its omission has better textual support, and its presence is likely scribal assimilation to the formulations of Luke and Paul. It is possible, however, that it is original if its omission resulted from homeoteleuton, as the full phrase would have appeared ΘΗΣΚΑΙΝΗΣΔΙΑΘΗΚΗΣ (see Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 3:472 n. 119). In light of the passage's emphasis on the centrality of Jesus and eschewing of most of the elements of the Passover meal, the presence of the adjective would fit well.

²⁰ Jeremias, *Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu*, 213.

²¹ Davies and Allison cite Lev 4:7, 18, 25, 30, 34; Num 35:33; Deut 21:17; Ps 79:10; Ezek 22:3; Joel 4:19; Acts 22:20; Rev 16:6; and Josephus, *Ant.* 19.94.

²² Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 3:474.

Allusions to Jer 31(LXX 38):31–34 have been suggested on the basis of διαθήκη καινή in v. 31 and ἁμαρταί in v. 34, as well as Zech 9:11 on the basis of ἐν αἵματι διαθήκης,²³ but Exod 24:8 remains the strongest possibility. In itself sacrificial, Exod 24:8 was interpreted in antiquity as explicitly expiatory.²⁴ In Heb 9:19–22 Moses is said to have sprinkled the book of the law and the people and said τοῦτο τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης ἧς ἐνετείλατο πρὸς ὑμᾶς ὁ θεός. The text then notes that Moses sprinkled the tent and vessels and concludes by saying καὶ χωρὶς αἱματεκχυσίας οὐ γίνεται ἄφεσις. Tg. Ps.-J. also rewrites Exod 24:8 in an expiatory direction:

Then Moses took the half of (פלגות) the blood that was in the dashing-basins (דבמזירקאי) and dashed (it) against the altar to make atonement for (לכפר על מדבחה) the people; and he said, “Behold, this is (זֶה) the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.”²⁵

Thus, Jesus’ Passover concerns his sacrificial death. It is his body and blood of the covenant broken and shed (τὸ σῶμά μου...τὸ αἷμά μου, Matt 26:26, 28). Further, they are broken and shed for the forgiveness of sins (εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, 26:28). This latter phrase may also be explained by Exod 24:8, in light of the expiatory reading in the history of interpretation.²⁶ The intratextual (cf. Matt 1:21) and intertextual possibilities afforded by 26:26–28 are richly suggestive.

These intertextual possibilities have again led scholars to focus on two familiar figures, that of Moses and that of the Suffering Servant. In the opinion of Davies and Allison, “‘For many’ [περὶ πολλῶν] and ‘poured out’ [ἐκχυννόμενον] likely advert to Isa 53:12 and so imply that Jesus in

²³ Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 132–33; and Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos. Die typologische Deutung des Alten Testaments im Neuen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), 136. Douglas J. Moo notes that the Targum to Zechariah mentions the blood of the Passover lamb at 9:11 (*The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives* [Sheffield: Almond, 1983], 302).

²⁴ For what follows, see Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 474–75; and Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives*, 301–11.

²⁵ Trans. Michael Maher, in *Targums Neofiti 1 and Pseudo-Jonathan: Exodus* (ed. Martin McNamara, C. T. R. Hayward, and Michael Maher; ArBib 2; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1994), 231. Emphases are the translator’s and represent targumic interpolations. That the Targum, Hebrews and the Gospel of Matthew all contain the word “this” against the MT and LXX is interesting. Davies and Allison assert that the writer of Hebrews gets τοῦτο from the tradition of the Lord’s Supper, but do not discuss the targumic reading (*Saint Matthew*, 3:475).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 3:475.

his death is the suffering servant of Isaiah.”²⁷ With regard to the phrase *περὶ πολλῶν*, the latter word, *πολλῶν*, is not found in Isa 53:10 LXX, nor any equivalent in Isa 53:10 MT, from which the former word, *περί*, is supposed to derive. The word *רבים* is found in Isa 53:12, from which *πολλῶν* is supposed to derive, but no equivalent for *περί*. If the empirical author of Matthew has used *περί* from Isa 53:10 LXX, as commentators routinely suggest, one must bear in mind that this verse states that the Lord desires to cleanse “him” from his misfortune (*καὶ κύριος βούλεται καθαρίσαι αὐτὸν τῆς πληγῆς*), and that it is the audience, not “he,” who is to give for sins (*ἐὰν δώτε περὶ ἁμαρτίας*). In Isa 53:12 MT one finds no mention of the shedding or pouring out of blood; rather, it is said that “... he poured out himself (NRSV; RSV “his soul”) to death” (*הערה למות נפשו*). Further, the word *ἐκχέω* does not appear in any Servant Songs in the LXX; it is used in reference to a libation in Isa 57:6 and the shedding of innocent blood in 59:7,²⁸ at which point the MT employs *שפך*. The word *ἐκχέω* is never used in the LXX to render *ערה*, which is found in Isa 53:12; aside from that verse the word is used with reference to laying bare the “secret parts” of the daughters of Zion (3:17), bare places on the Nile (19:7), uncovering a shield (22:6), and the pouring out of the Spirit (32:15).

It may here again be advisable to seek first not intertextual but intratextual references. In Matt 23:35 Jesus speaks of *πᾶν αἷμα δίκαιον ἐκχυνόμενον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς* coming upon the scribes and Pharisees, who are responsible for the blood of all the righteous from Abel to Zechariah. The shedding of Jesus’ blood in the Gospel of Matthew results both from a murderous human conspiracy as well as the divine will. Further, Lev 4–16 is peppered with the language of *περὶ [τῆς] ἁμαρτίας*, which may therefore contain better candidates for a precursor text than Isa 53. In short, finding an allusion to the Servant here is a dubitable prospect, as Luz rightly observes: “Mir ist der Anklang an Jes 53 wie bei 20,28 sehr fraglich, da kaum wörtliche Übereinstimmungen festzustellen sind.”²⁹ Other intratextual or intertextual options are much more efficient and fruitful.

²⁷ Ibid., 3:465.

²⁸ οἱ δὲ πόδες αὐτῶν ἐπὶ πονηρίαν τρέχουσιν ταχινοὶ ἐκχέαι αἷμα (59:7a).

²⁹ Luz, *Matthäus*, 4:115.

The possible allusion to Exod 24:8, however, has led to the discovery of a more likely typological prospect, namely Moses. Davies and Allison write:

There is a typological relationship between the act of Moses and the act of Jesus, a relationship consistent with and reinforced by the Moses typology present elsewhere. As the first redeemer made a sacrifice for the people so that they might enter into a new covenant with God, so does the last redeemer inaugurate another covenant by offering his blood, that is, his life, for the forgiveness of sins.³⁰

This statement overestimates the significance of Moses for the scene of the Lord's Supper, however. The emphasis is not on Moses *per se* in this passage but on the effecting of a new covenant through Jesus' self-sacrifice, and Isaac was the figure in Jewish imagination whose self-sacrifice was associated with Passover. Davies and Allison, however, dismiss him: "Although 'the blood of Isaac' appears to be a pre-Christian phrase (LAB 18.5–6), and although Jewish tradition associated the Aqedah with Passover, we do not see any obvious relationship with the last supper."³¹ If one considers the totality of the Matthean narrative, however, the relationship is obvious. Prior to the Lord's Supper, the Model Reader has perceived much that indicates Jesus is a new Isaac: Jesus is the obedient beloved Son who will readily endure the sacrificial death ordained for him by his Father. Thus, the Model Reader finds it significant that Jesus' death will occur at the Passover festival and that Jesus interprets his death using sacrificial language at the Passover meal. The function of the allusion to Exod 24:8 concerns not the figure of Moses but the concept of the covenant, with which Isaac was associated in Jewish tradition.

Can we go further? It is intriguing that the Matthean Lord's Supper, which is indeed set in the context of a Passover meal (Matt 26:17, 19), includes no hint of a Passover lamb whatsoever. The Model Reader may rightly hazard that the passage subtly and suggestively presents Jesus himself as the substitute for the Passover lamb.³² Jesus as paschal

³⁰ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 3:473.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 3:474 n. 128.

³² Speaking with regard to the historical situation, Jeremias writes, "Wie hat Jesus das Passalamme gedeutet? Da er, wie die Deuteworte zeigen, Brot und Wein auf sich selbst deutete, liegt die Vermutung nahe, daß er in der vorausgegangenen Passaandacht auch das Passalamme auf sich selbst gedeutet hat" (*Die Abendmahls Worte Jesu*, 214). The Gospel of Matthew may not expect the Model Reader to hypothesize that the Matthean Jesus delivered such a self-referring homily, but the Model Reader would connect the

lamb was not unknown in the encyclopedia of earliest Christianity. Well before the date of the composition of the Gospel of Matthew accepted by most scholars, Paul wrote, τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν ἐτύθη Χριστός (1 Cor 5:7). An abundance of other New Testament texts are similar.³³ Jeremias notes that the phrase “his blood,” which he considers pre-Pauline because of its wide usage in early Christianity, comes not from the fact of Jesus’ crucifixion, which was a relatively “unblutige Tötungsart,” but rather from the understanding of Jesus as a sacrifice, particularly a paschal sacrifice.³⁴ Jeremias sums up the import:

Mit den Worten *den bišri* “das ist mein (Opfer)fleisch” und *den ’idhmi* “das ist mein (Opfer)blut” redet Jesus also höchstwahrscheinlich von sich als dem Passalamm. Er ist das eschatologische Passalamm, das die Erfüllung darstellt, für die das ägyptische Passalamm und alle seither geopfert Passalämmer das Vorbild waren.³⁵

While Jeremias is speaking in terms of raw history, his comments hold also for the Matthean version of the Lord’s Supper, which emphasizes the Passover occasion and sacrificial nature of Jesus’ death. Regardless of whether the scene implies that Jesus is the Passover lamb through the lack of mention of the lamb or that Jesus’ sacrifice is merely *like* that of the Passover lamb, the Model Reader has sufficient information to make the connection: Jesus’ sacrifice is a Passover sacrifice. Jesus is to be slain like the Passover lamb.

If the Passover lambs were the *Vorbild* for Jesus, however, what was the *Vorbild* for those lambs? The answer is Isaac, the patriarchal prototype and paradigm of all Jewish sacrifice. In Jewish tradition, as we have seen, the Akedah was linked to Passover and all temple sacrifices. If the Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus’ Passover sacrifice as the ultimate and decisive sacrifice, it is all but required for the Gospel to present Jesus as a new Isaac. Just as the Gospel presents Jesus as a Davidid in service of presenting and defending Jesus as the Messiah, so too does the Gospel present Jesus as a new Isaac in service of presenting and

lack of mention of a lamb with Jesus’ sacrificial utterances about himself and abduct that Jesus’ sacrifice replaces that of the Passover lamb.

³³ Cf., *inter alios*, John 1:29, 36; 19:36; 1 Pet 1:19; Rev 5:6, 9, 12; 12:11; cf. also Justin, *Dial.* 72.1.

³⁴ Jeremias, *Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu*, 214.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 214–15.

defending Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice.³⁶ He is both son of David and son of Abraham (Matt 1:1).

In conclusion, the Model Reader would perceive a connection between Jesus and Isaac here at the Last Supper. Prior to this point, Jesus has already been portrayed as the obedient, beloved Son who must undergo a sacrificial death at his Father's behest. The meal (as well as the entire Passion Narrative) is deliberately set in a Passover context; the meal (as well as Jesus' death) is strongly sacrificial; and at the meal (as well as in the entire Passion Narrative) Jesus is fully in control, which reveals the extent and character of his obedience: although he knows he will be betrayed and even identifies his betrayer, he continues on the course ordained him by his Father. Finally, if Jesus' body and blood are the sacrifice of the new covenant, it is for all practical purposes necessary for the Gospel to present him as a new Isaac.

Excursus: Passover and the Akedah in Targumic and Rabbinic Literature

To this point, I have refrained from discussing much targumic material in order to avoid the charge of anachronism. While the case presented here does not rest on targumic or rabbinic traditions, it may nevertheless be of interest to observe that Isaac and Passover are strongly linked in the Targums and rabbinic literature. Certain scholars, including Vermes, Hayward and Roger Le Déaut, find a more precise connection. Hayward writes,

Isaac is the lamb of sacrifice, and all future lamb offerings were held to be a "memorial" of his Aqedah. Two particular classes of lamb offering, however, stand out as "memorials" of the Aqedah: these are the Tamid offerings and the Passover lamb.³⁷

Hayward cites *Lev. Rab.* 2:11 as well as *Mekh. de R. Ishmael* Pisha 7:78–79.³⁸ The latter reads, רואה אני דם עקידתו של יצחק (i.e., of the Passover lamb) וראיתי את הדם. Hayward also draws attention to the "Poem of the Four Nights" in *Tg. Neof. to Exod 12:42*. The Targum

³⁶ Jeremias, for his part, goes on in his subsequent argumentation to contend for the decisive significance of the Suffering Servant and Isa 53 for interpreting the saving significance of Jesus' death, and thus again we see another instance in which the influence of the Servant has occluded a role for Isaac (*Die Abendmahlworte Jesu*), 218–23.

³⁷ Hayward, "The Present State of Research into the Targumic Account of the Sacrifice of Isaac," *JJS* 32 (1981): 139. See also Vermes, "Redemption and Genesis xxii," 215–17.

³⁸ Hayward, "Present State," 139–40.

describes the first Passover night as “a night reserved *and set aside* for redemption to the name of the Lord at the time the children of Israel were brought out *redeemed* from the land of Egypt. Truly, four nights are those that are written in the Book of Memorials.”³⁹ The first night concerns creation, the second the birth and binding of Isaac, the third the first Passover/exodus, and the fourth eschatological messianic deliverance, which is “the night of the Passover to the name of the Lord: it is a night reserved *and set aside* for the redemption of all Israel, throughout their generations.” The second night contains a reference to the Akedah: ויצחק הוה בר תלתין ושבע שנים כד אתקרב ית על-גבי מדבה. Hayward thus writes, “Isaac, the lamb of the burnt offering, is thus placed on the same theological level as the Passover lamb.”⁴⁰

Although Davies and Chilton contend that the Akedah developed late “as a deliberate and explicit substitute for the Tamid, the previous source of expiation for Israel’s sins,”⁴¹ Hayward notes that none of the Targumic references bear any trace of such a rationale: “we find no hint whatsoever that the Aqedah is a substitute for the Tamid—or, indeed, for any other sacrifice. On the contrary, the Targums make it clear that the Aqedah legitimates future lamb offerings and the place where they are to be offered.”⁴² This bears on the date of this tradition. In Jewish tradition, the Akedah is associated with both Passover and Rosh Hashanah. Davies and Chilton maintain that the latter association is older and the former, of course, more recent, being in their view an Amoraic reaction to Christian claims. But given that there is no indication whatsoever in the targumic or rabbinic material associating Isaac and Passover that the Akedah functions as a replacement for the Tamid or Passover sacrifice, Hayward’s suggestion makes good sense: “the cessation of the Passover sacrifice after A.D. 70 would have served to loosen the connection between that festival and the Aqedah.”⁴³ Thus, the link between the Passover lamb in particular and the Akedah may indeed be ancient, ancient enough for the Model Reader of the Gospel of Matthew to appreciate and appropriate.⁴⁴ Even if not, however,

³⁹ Trans. Maher. Emphases are targumic interpolations to the Exodus text.

⁴⁰ Hayward, “Present State,” 140.

⁴¹ Davies and Chilton, “Aqedah,” 534; cited by Hayward, “Present State,” 147.

⁴² Hayward, “Present State,” 147.

⁴³ Ibid., 145; see Vermes, “Redemption,” 216.

⁴⁴ Le Déaut contends that the contents of the Poem of the Four Nights are largely pre-Christian (*La Nuit Pascale, Essai sur la signification de la Pâque juive à partir du Targum d'Exode XII*, 42 [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1975], 340–70).

the Akedah was definitely linked to Passover from an early date (e.g., *Jubilees*, 4Q225).

10.4 GETHSEMANE AND ARREST: THE ULTIMATE OBEDIENCE OF THE BELOVED SON

The Matthean Gethsemane and arrest sequence is usually interpreted along three complementary lines. First, the passage underscores Jesus' resolve to go his appointed way to the cross. Second, the passage provides narrative exhortation to nonviolence: Jesus obeys his own injunction prohibiting resistance to violence (Matt 5:38–42) in refusing deliverance by the sword (26:52).⁴⁵ Third, the passage presents negative apologetic: Jesus' refusal of violent human deliverance and divine rescue refutes any notions that he was a brigand or magician.⁴⁶

These three converging lines of interpretation cohere well with another function of the passage heretofore overlooked, perceptible to readers (such as the Matthean Model Reader) sensitive to Matthean narrative dynamics and familiar with traditions of the Akedah. Through arresting allusions to Gen 22, the Matthean Gethsemane and arrest sequence evokes echoes of the Akedah and thus presents Jesus as a new Isaac, who, like the Isaac of extrabiblical Jewish tradition, actively, willingly and obediently faces his sacrifice with implicit obedience and unflinching courage. The passage thus presents Jesus' obedience in a particular and not merely general way, underscores the fact that his death was more than a mere quasi-judicial murder but rather a divinely ordained sacrifice, provides a *telos* for Jesus' exercise of nonviolence and functions as positive apologetic, providing a positive identity for Jesus in the wake of the implicit denial that Jesus was either brigand or magician.

In light of the prior allusions to and echoes of Isaac, the Model Reader is not surprised to find similar allusions and echoes in the Gethsemane

⁴⁵ Davies and Allison write, "...it is not only Matthew's content which recalls the SM...the very vocabulary does this, for Matthew uses ἀποστρέφω only here and in 5.42" (*Saint Matthew*, 3:512).

⁴⁶ Harrington writes, "Jesus rebukes his disciple for using his sword and states that he is no *lēstēs*... By refusing to call upon his Father's twelve legions of angels... Jesus avoids doing what a *goēs* might promise... In this way Matthew may well have been countering assessments of Jesus that were being offered by opponents of the Matthean community" (*Matthew*, 377).

and arrest sequence, especially since both the Akedah and the sequence concern the obedience of a beloved Son.

Gethsemane presents two potential allusions to Gen 22. In Matt 26:36 Jesus commands his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray”; in Gen 22:5 Abraham orders his servants, “Sit here... [we] will go over there and worship.” Both verses contain an unusual construction, the adverbial αὐτοῦ:

Matt 26:36: καθίσαιτε αὐτοῦ ἕως [οὔ] ἀπελθὼν ἐκεῖ προσεύξωμαι

Gen 22:5: καθίσαιτε αὐτοῦ ... διελευσόμεθα ἕως ὧδε καὶ προσκυνήσαντες

The adverbial αὐτοῦ is rare, occurring only three times in the New Testament, all in Luke-Acts (Luke 9:27; Acts 18:19 and 21:4, the Markan parallel of 14:32 has ὧδε). The Model Reader therefore finds a near indubitable allusion.⁴⁷ Moreover, in Matt 26:41 Jesus commands his disciples to “watch and pray that you may not come into testing,” (εἰς πειρασμόν), while in Gen 22:1 God “tested” Abraham (ἐπείραζεν). Gethsemane and the Akedah are each times of testing.

The reader finds significant verbal correspondence with Gen 22 in the scene of the arrest as well. Consider the following parallels:

1. Swords and clubs, knife and wood

Matt 26:47, 55: μετὰ μαχαίρων καὶ ξύλων

Gen 22:6, 10: τὴν μάχαιραν

Gen 22:3, 6, 7, 9: [τὰ] ξύλα

2. Laying hands on Jesus/the young man

Matt 26:50: τότε προσελθόντες ἐπέβαλον τὰς χεῖρας ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰησοῦν⁴⁸

Gen 22:12: καὶ εἶπεν μὴ ἐπιβάλης τὴν χεῖρά σου ἐπὶ τὸ παιδάριον

3. Stretching forth the hand

Matt 26:51: καὶ ἰδοὺ εἷς τῶν μετὰ Ἰησοῦ ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα ἀπέσπασεν τὴν μάχαιραν αὐτοῦ⁴⁹

⁴⁷ It appears also in textual variants at Mark 6:33 and Acts 15:34.

⁴⁸ For those interested in redactional concerns, the parallel in Mark 14:46 reads: οἱ δὲ ἐπέβαλον τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῷ. Thus, assuming Markan priority, Matthew would have added ἐπὶ τὸν to bring his version in line with Gen 22:12 LXX.

⁴⁹ Mark 14:47 altogether lacks any form of ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα. Thus, on a redaction-critical reading, Matthew would have edited his assumed Markan source so that his own version alludes to Gen 22:10 LXX.

Gen 22:10: καὶ ἐξέτεινεν Ἀβρααμ τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ λαβεῖν τὴν μάχαιραν σφάξαι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ

4. Taking the knife/sword

Matt 26:52: οἱ λαβόντες μάχαιραν ἐν μαχαίρῃ ἀπολοῦνται

Gen 22:10: καὶ ἐξέτεινεν Ἀβρααμ τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ λαβεῖν τὴν μάχαιραν σφάξαι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ

In terms of raw verbal correspondence, the links between the scene of the arrest and Gen 22 are impressive. Again, however, the mere identification of verbal correspondence is not sufficient to establish intentional intertextual connection; systematic interpretation is required. Let us thus consider these connections in more detail.

Most remarkable is the phrase μετὰ μαχαίρων καὶ ξύλων (“with swords and clubs”) found in both Matt 26:47 and 55. In Gen 22:6 and 10 the Model Reader finds μάχαιρα (“knife”), while in Gen 22:3, 6, 7, and 9 the Model Reader finds ξύλα (“wood”). Only in Gen 22 and the synoptic accounts of the arrest are these nouns found in such close collocation. Although translated differently in English versions of Matt 26:47–56 and Gen 22, in both passages they are instruments of violent death.⁵⁰ Further, in Matt 26:50, after Judas greets Jesus, the crowd ἐπέβαλον τὰς χεῖρας ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰησοῦν (“laid hands on Jesus”), while the angel in Gen 22:12 instructs Abraham, μὴ ἐπιβάλης τὴν χεῖρά σου ἐπὶ τὸ παιδάριον (“do not lay your hand on the boy [i.e., Isaac]”). Finally, in Matt 26:51 a nameless disciple ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα ἀπέσπασεν τὴν μάχαιραν αὐτοῦ (“stretched forth his hand to draw his sword”), while Gen 22:10 relates that ἐξέτεινεν Ἀβρααμ τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ λαβεῖν τὴν μάχαιραν (“Abraham stretched forth his hand to take the knife”) to slay Isaac.

In terms of Hays’s criteria of “volume” and “recurrence” or “clustering,” these intriguing verbal parallels appear too strong to be merely fortuitous. The reader finds a high degree of explicit verbal correspondence, Gen 22 is a prominent precursor text within Israel’s Scripture, the Akedah was a prominent precursor tradition in the Jewish cultural

⁵⁰ Both nouns μάχαιρα and ξύλον appear in Ezek 31:18, a verse consisting of 31 Greek words, but there they are the “trees of splendor” (μετὰ τῶν ξύλων τῆς τρυφῆς), while Pharaoh and his multitude lie “with those wounded by the sword” (μετὰ τραυματιῶν μαχαίρας).

encyclopedia and the Gospel has already alluded to Isaac several times.⁵¹ It is not sufficient, however, simply to identify and catalogue verbal parallels, to hunt for sources and influences while neglecting interpretive synthesis. How might the Model Reader make coherent sense of these data? Why does Jesus speak Abraham's words if he is likened to Isaac? What does the crowd with its swords and clubs have to do with Abraham's sacrificial implements? Before undertaking and offering an overarching, systematic interpretation of the passage which answers such questions, we must attend to certain preliminary issues.

First, as discussed, the Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus as obedient to the divine will throughout its entirety. Again and again the Matthean Jesus stresses the necessity of action and obedience (cf. 5:18–20; 7:15–23; 12:33–37; 12:46–50; 21:28–32; 21:43; 25:1–30; 25:31–46; 28:20). The Gethsemane and arrest sequence chiefly concerns Jesus' obedience and is indeed the pinnacle of this Matthean theme.

Second, the Gospel of Matthew is, broadly speaking, deeply apocalyptic, a facet often neglected due to the common Enlightenment fascination with and understanding of the Sermon on the Mount (which actually ends on an apocalyptic note [7:22–27]) and concomitant estimation of Jesus as an ethical teacher who just happened to anticipate Kant by about 1750 years.⁵² After defeating the devil in the testing narrative (4:1–11), Jesus performs exorcisms (8:28–34; 9:32–38; 12:22) as well as healings (chs. 8–9), discusses Beelzebul (12:22–30), identifies the enemy as the devil (13:39), predicts the destruction of the temple and the end of the world and discusses the final judgment (chs. 24–25). Jesus' death and resurrection involve cosmic, apocalyptic phenomena (27:51–52). Dreams are prominent in the opening two chapters and the Passion Narrative (1:20–21; 2:12; 2:13; 2:19; 2:22; 27:19), and angels find frequent mention (1:20, 1:24, 2:13, 2:19, 4:6, 4:11, 13:39, 41, 49, 16:27, 18:10, 22:30, 24:31, 24:36, 25:31, 25:41, 26:53, 28:2). It is important to note that in an apocalyptic, dualist worldview, the devil is ultimately under God's control, as in 4:1, where the Spirit of God drives Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, or in the Lord's Prayer at 6:41, where it is implied that the devil's testing is ultimately the doing of the Father (to paraphrase loosely but faithfully: "And may you, Father, not

⁵¹ Hays, *Echoes*, 25–33.

⁵² On Matthean apocalypticism and its neglect, see David E. Orton, *The Understanding Scribe: Matthew and the Apocalyptic Ideal* (JSNTSup 25; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989).

put us to the test, but rather, on the other hand, rescue us from the evil one, who, after all, stands ultimately under your control”).

Third, in the Gospel the death of Jesus is a function both of his human enemies, who stand under Satan’s rule (e.g. 12:34), and of the will of God the Father. This dynamic is captured succinctly in Jesus’ words in Matt 26:24a: “The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!” Throughout the Gospel, the Model Reader encounters many references to the divine necessity of Jesus’ suffering, sacrificial death and resurrection, such as within Jesus’ passion predictions, the ransom saying, and the words over the cup in the Last Supper. The divine necessity of Jesus’ sacrificial death is strongly revealed precisely in his being deemed God’s beloved Son at the baptism and also at the transfiguration. In light of these preliminaries, we may begin to examine the Matthean Gethsemane and arrest sequence and see how the Model Reader perceives echoes of the Akedah.

In thematic terms, the willing obedience of Jesus in Gethsemane to endure sacrificial death reflects Isaac’s willing obedience at the Akedah. In Gethsemane, the Matthean Jesus displays absolute fidelity to his Father’s will and does not struggle with his vocation. As Davies and Allison rightly observe, “[Jesus’] course is fixed by the will of God, and this overrides whatever beliefs or feelings he has about death, so there is no real resistance. For Jesus the issue is not death but submission to the divine will: ‘Thy will be done.’”⁵³ For the sake of contrast, while the Markan Jesus is ultimately obedient, the Markan version emphasizes Jesus’ severe distress (Mark 14:34) and prayer to have the cup removed (“And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him,” 14:35) as well as the disciples’ failure to keep watch in the hour (14:37–38, 40–41; cf. 13:32–37). The Matthean Jesus, by contrast, is focused chiefly on the divine will, not on the possibility the cup may pass: “And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want’” (Matt 26:39). The second prayer is similar: “Again he went away for the second time and prayed, ‘My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done’” (26:42). The text simply notes that

⁵³ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 3:502. See also Moberly, *Bible, Theology, and Faith*, 211–15.

the content of the third prayer was identical: "So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words" (26:44). The Matthean Jesus' prayers thus evince no progression and no existential struggle. Unlike Mark's version, the third prayer is not the resolution of Jesus' struggle. Rather, the narrator makes a simple laconic statement.⁵⁴ The Matthean Jesus thus affirms and thrice submits to the divine will in Gethsemane.

Having declared his submission, Jesus then goes to meet Judas and his party with deliberation: "Rise, let us go (ἄγωμεν). The one who betrays me has come near" (Matt 26:46). Jesus rises not to flee but to confront: ἄγωμεν connotes decisive approach (cf. 21:2), not withdrawal or retreat, for which the Gospel regularly employs ἀναχωρέω (2:12, 13, 14, 22; 4:12; 12:15; 14:13; 15:21; cf. also 9:24 and 27:5), thus displaying Jesus' willingness to submit to the divine will he has thrice affirmed.⁵⁵

Noting the verbal allusions to Gen 22 in the Gethsemane scene, Davies and Allison raise the issue of thematic parallels: "Is Matthew suggesting a parallel between Abraham's faith and Jesus' faith? or between Isaac's sacrifice and Jesus' sacrifice?" Without choosing either option, they continue: "This [*sic!*] is a real possibility. In addition to the parallels of wording and content just noted we observe that both Abraham and Jesus take along three people, that Abraham and Isaac separate themselves from others for worship or prayer, that both episodes are set on a mountain, and that each involves a trial,"⁵⁶ thus suggesting the scene does connect Jesus with either Abraham or Isaac in some vague way. They offer no integrative, systematic interpretation, however.

Were one to choose, Abraham might seem the logical option, since Jesus' command, καθίσατε αὐτοῦ, matches Abraham's (Matt 26:36/Gen 22:5). The following considerations, however, suggest Jesus the Son is compared to Isaac the son and God the Father to Abraham the father. First, the Gospel has designated Jesus as the beloved Son twice (Matt 3:17 and 17:5, as well as "Son" *passim* and "my beloved" in 12:18), thus equating him with Isaac. Second, Gethsemane concerns Jesus' death, as the Akedah concerns Isaac's death. Third, in Gethsemane God is silently present with Jesus by virtue of his prayer to his Father (Matt 26:39, 42, 44) as Abraham is present with Isaac. Fourth, both Gethsemane and the

⁵⁴ See Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 3:498, and Thrall, *Greek Particles in the New Testament: Linguistic and Exegetical Studies* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 67–70.

⁵⁵ See again Good, "The Verb ANAXΩPEΩ."

⁵⁶ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 3:494.

Akedah concern the sons' willingness to obey their respective Fathers and endure sacrifice. Fifth, since Isaac's willingness and obedience in the matter of the Akedah were understood as identical to Abraham's willingness and obedience, Jesus can speak Abraham's words here in Gethsemane as a new Isaac. Therefore, Jesus' words καθίσσατε αὐτοῦ allude to Gen 22:5 and produce an echo of a willing Isaac. In the same way, Gethsemane is Jesus' test (πειρασμός, Matt 26:41) as the Akedah was a test of Isaac in the tradition,⁵⁷ even though Gen 22 explicitly states that God tested Abraham.⁵⁸

At the arrest, Jesus follows through on the commitment he declared in Gethsemane. He obeys his Father's will and voluntarily goes forward with the passion, eschewing the angelic aid and mortal might which would save him from death (Matt 26:52–53). Judas and a large crowd approach, armed with swords and clubs, μετὰ μαχαίρων καὶ ξύλων (26:47), or, perhaps better, with knives and pieces of wood for their unwitting sacrificial offering of Jesus. The reader is informed that Judas had told the crowd, "The one I shall kiss is the man; arrest him" (26:48); Judas' plan is that the kiss should precipitate Jesus' immediate arrest. Judas addresses Jesus as "Rabbi" (a negative term in the Gospel of Matthew; cf. 23:7–8; 26:25) and kisses him (26:49). Before the crowd can act on the signal and move in to arrest Jesus, however, Jesus interjects and addresses Judas as ἐταῖρος ("friend," also a negative term in the Gospel; cf. 20:13; 22:12) and says to him, ἐφ' ὃ πάρει (26:50a). The phrase is difficult; given Jesus' control of events throughout the Passion Narrative, it likely possesses the import of "Friend, now do that for which you have come."⁵⁹

Note well that in responding to Judas in this way, Jesus has interrupted Judas' proposed plan. Jesus has seized control of events. Only "then"—again, the small but significant word τότε—after Jesus gives the go-ahead, as it were, can the crowd lay hands upon Jesus and arrest him (τότε προσελθόντες ἐπέβαλον τὰς χεῖρας ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ ἐκράτησαν

⁵⁷ Especially in Jdt 8:24–27, where the Akedah is explicitly described as a test of Isaac.

⁵⁸ In Matt 26:41, the issue does not concern temptation in general, but rather the specific test at hand, for Peter's and the disciples' sleeping in Gethsemane precisely parallels the predictions of scandal and denial immediately preceding the Gethsemane scene in 26:31–35.

⁵⁹ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 3:509–10, following the reading of Latin codex Armachanus (*fac ad quod venisti*).

αὐτόν, 26:50b), as Abraham would have laid hands on his son Isaac (Gen 22:12). The τότε is indeed significant. As in Matt 26:1–5, it is only after Jesus declares what will be, only after Jesus grants permission, as it were, that his enemies can act. Far more than merely accepting his fate, Jesus directly contributes to the execution of the divine plan, his sacrificial death.

The crowd who lays hands upon Jesus to bring about his slaughter wields swords and clubs; Abraham would have laid hands on Isaac to slaughter him with the sacrificial implements of the knife and wood. Detecting thematic coherence here depends on an awareness of the Gospel's thoroughgoing apocalypticism, particularly the idea that all events, even those done by God's human and satanic enemies, are ultimately under God's control, serving God's purposes. Again, the death of Jesus is a function both of conspiracy of his human enemies (cf. Matt 12:14, 26:3–4 and 26:24a) who stand under Satan's rule (cf. 12:34) and of the will of God the Father, as the Gospel emphasizes the divine necessity of Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection and its sacrificial nature in loci such as Jesus' passion predictions (16:21; 17:12, 22–23; 20:17–19; 26:1–2), the ransom saying (20:28) and the words over the cup in the Last Supper (26:28).

Thus, since the death of Jesus is an act of God in the Gospel, and since in the Gospel's apocalyptic worldview all things, including the actions of the crowd, are ultimately God's doing, God as Father of Jesus the beloved Son in effect wields the crowd with its μάχαιραι and ξύλα (“swords and clubs”) to bring about Jesus' sacrificial death in the same way Abraham the father of Isaac the beloved son wielded the μάχαιρα and ξύλα (“knife” and “wood”) to bring about Isaac's sacrificial death. The Model Reader thus perceives the following parallels:

Gen 22/Akedah	Gethsemane-Arrest Sequence
Abraham	God
Knife and wood	Crowd with swords and clubs
Isaac	Jesus

One of those with Jesus, however, threatens to derail the divine plan, a disciple who has apparently ignored the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:38–48) and the several passion predictions: stretching forth his hand (ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα), he grasps his sword (τὴν μάχαιραν) and attacks the

servant of the High Priest (26:51). Whereas Abraham stretched forth his hand (ἐξέτεινεν... τὴν χεῖρα) to take his knife (τὴν μάχαιραν) to slay his son (Gen 22:10), this disciple does so to slay a hapless servant. Had the disciple paid attention to the passion prediction immediately *preceding* the transfiguration (Matt 16:21), the voice evoking the Akedah *at* the transfiguration (17:5—"this is my beloved son"), and Jesus' words concerning his coming suffering *subsequent* to the transfiguration (17:12), he would have known that the beloved Son Jesus must endure sacrificial death like the beloved son Isaac.⁶⁰ Hearing echoes of the Akedah here in Matt 26:51 involves high irony: Abraham's action would fulfill the will of God, while this disciple's would thwart it.

Having resolved to endure his sacrificial death, however, Jesus again seizes control simply by speaking, the narrator introducing his words with the significant τότε: "Then (τότε) Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword'" (Matt 26:52). Jesus next reveals how utterly ironic and misguided the nameless disciple's attack was. Were he only to ask his Father, he would be able (δύναμαι) to obtain more than twelve legions of angels who stand ready to rescue him (26:53). As in 4:6–7, however, Jesus refuses angelic aid; his death is perfectly voluntary and he is in total control. One must not overlook this: in the narrative world of the Gospel, the angels are real. As in 4:11, they stand ready to serve and aid him. As Dahl notes:

The hearer of Matthew's story hardly doubts for a moment that twelve legions of angels would have been at the disposal of Jesus the Christ if he had prayed for them. But that was a moral impossibility (26:53; cf. 26:61, *dynamai*, 'I am able').⁶¹

Thus, Jesus readily submits to his sacrificial death. He does not merely submit to an inevitable death with psychological courage and resignation. Rather, like the Maccabean martyrs, Jesus could indeed avoid death, but, because of his obedience to God his Father, he nevertheless chooses it of his own free accord and even orchestrates events to secure it. Its inevitability lies not in a murderous human conspiracy nor solely in the inscrutable will of God but in Jesus' iron determina-

⁶⁰ In Matt 17:6, all the disciples hear the heavenly voice, not only Peter, James, and John.

⁶¹ Dahl, "Passion Narrative," 44.

tion to obey his Father in sacrifice as Isaac obeyed his. As Cyril of Alexandria observes:

The child being led to the sacrifice by his father indicates through symbol and outline that neither human strength nor the greed of the conspirators led our Lord Jesus Christ to the cross, but the desire of the Father.⁶²

Jesus explains to the violent disciple the scriptural necessity of his suffering, death and resurrection: “But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way? (ὅτι οὕτως δεῖ γενέσθαι)” (26:54). The δεῖ here recalls the passion prediction in 16:21 (“...that it is necessary [ὅτι δεῖ αὐτόν] for him to...suffer many things...and be killed and be raised on the third day”), implying that the scriptural necessity of 26:54 concerns Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection. Jesus’ closing words, that “all this (τοῦτο...ὅλον) has taken place so that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled” (26:56), also imply Jesus’ death is a divine necessity. In light of the role of the Akedah in the passage, the scriptures include Gen 22.⁶³

Jesus addresses the crowds “in that hour” (ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ, Matt 26:55), recalling his words in 26:45 regarding “the hour” (ἡ ὥρα) in which the Son of Man is handed over into the hands of sinners. Jesus implies he is not a brigand, a ληστής (although he will be crucified between two, 27:38, 44) and notes that even though he sat in the temple teaching by day (καθ’ ἡμέραν) they did not then seize him. Jesus’ words imply that the swords and clubs are unnecessary, that he is hiding from no one and fearing no man, that he is prepared to endure his divinely

⁶² *Paschal Homily 5*, cited and trans. Kessler, *Bound by the Bible*, 67.

⁶³ Possibilities for the referent of “the scriptures” in Matt 26:54 and 56 include the scriptures in general, Ps 41:10/40:10 LXX/41:9 Eng., Isa 53:12 and Zech 13:7. In light of the role of Isaac in the passage and throughout the Gospel, however, Gen 22 is also a serious option. Although Matt 26:56 speaks specifically of “the scriptures of the prophets” (αἱ γραφαὶ τῶν προφητῶν) and Gen 22 is not a prophetic text per se, the Law and the Prophets are given as a unity four times in the Gospel (5:17, 7:12, 11:13, 22:40). In 7:12 the Law and the Prophets are summed up together as one under the rubric of the so-called “Golden Rule.” Similarly, Jesus links the Law and the Prophets in 22:40 even though he was questioned specifically about the Law (22:36). Moreover, Jesus presents the Law itself as something to be fulfilled (5:17) and states that the Law itself prophesies (“For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John came,” 11:13). The Law therefore has the character of prophecy, not surprising in light of the oracular view of Scripture the Gospel evinces. Meier writes, “when we say that Matthew interprets the Law in analogy with prophecy, we do not simply mean that Matthew stresses the prophets’ message of mercy and compassion...Matthew gives the Law a prophetic function which is tied to a definite period of salvation-history, a function which is superannuated by the coming of the Fulfiller” (*Vision of Matthew*, 228).

ordained sacrificial death voluntarily in obedience. In this way the Matthean Jesus fulfills the typology of the Akedah.

10.5 SUMMARY

In conclusion, prior to the Matthean Gethsemane and arrest sequence, the reader has encountered several suggestive verbal and thematic parallels between Isaac and Jesus which concern not only their deaths but also their very births. The entire life of the Matthean Jesus, then, unfolds in the shadow of Isaac. The Model Reader is thus not surprised to find that the Gethsemane and arrest sequence contains conspicuous verbal allusions to Gen 22 and, on the basis of the thematic topic of the passage, Jesus' obedience to endure his sacrificial death, the Model Reader sees in Jesus a new Isaac, who, in postbiblical but also pre-Christian tradition, was also a willing, active and obedient participant in his sacrifice. Indeed, the typology encompasses the figures of God and Abraham as well: Abraham endeavors to slay his willing and obedient beloved son Isaac, wielding the sacrificial implements of the knife and wood, while God the Father endeavors to slay his willing and obedient beloved Son Jesus, wielding the crowd, as it were, with its implements of swords and clubs.

The Akedah thus plays a major role in the Matthean Gethsemane and arrest sequence. It emphasizes Jesus' general obedience by appropriating a specific type, reveals that his death resulted from obedience to the divine plan, not a mere human conspiracy, gives his sacrifice as a rationale for his nonviolence, and functions as positive apologetic. The subtle mechanism of allusion increasing its very force,⁶⁴ the passage powerfully demonstrates not only that Jesus is neither brigand nor magician nor coward; he is in fact cut from the same cloth as Isaac, who faced his sacrificial death with incomparable obedience and courage.

In the Passion Narrative, then, the Model Reader finds confirmation of abductive hypotheses hazarded heretofore with respect to other loci in which Isaac appears to play a major typological role. The willingness of the Matthean Jesus to obey his Father in enduring his sacrificial passion at Passover reflects the Isaac of the Akedah in terms of thematic correspondence, and the Gethsemane and arrest sequence presents several

⁶⁴ Cf. Demetrius, *On Style*, 287–88; and Longinus, *On the Sublime*, 16.

striking verbal allusions to Gen 22. Thus, the Model Reader concludes that the Gospel of Matthew operates with a significant Isaac typology. Indeed, the typology is actually broader, involving figures beyond merely Isaac and Jesus. The typology involves two holy families, as it were: Abraham, Sarah and Isaac are types of God, Mary and Jesus.

If such a typology exists in the Gospel of Matthew, it remains to examine more broadly what wider significance it may have and functions it may perform. Given the association of the Akedah with the temple in Jewish tradition and the significance of the temple for the Gospel of Matthew, the Isaac typology may function in service of presenting Jesus as a new temple and as the decisive, ultimate sacrifice.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW AND THE FIGURE OF ISAAC

11.1 SUMMARY: THE FIGURE OF ISAAC IN THE FIRST GOSPEL

The chief task of this project has been simply to demonstrate that the figure of Isaac plays a substantive role in the Gospel of Matthew, that Isaac is *there*, waiting to be perceived and appreciated by those with the eyes to see the allusions in the text of the Gospel and ears to hear the echoes of Scripture and tradition produced thereby. Doing so necessitated the surmounting of four persistent obstacles in Matthean scholarship, which have obstructed scholars from perceiving the Akedah in Matthew.

First, the redaction-critical approach employed by most Matthean scholars fails to take sufficient consideration of the narrative dynamics of the Gospel, which involves a concomitant neglect of the cumulative force of the many passages in which Isaac might play a decisive role. The redaction-critical approach also involves substituting the purported meaning of Mark and reconstructed pre-Markan tradition for what actually stands written in the Matthean text.

Second, many Matthean scholars consider the MT form and content of the Old Testament decisive, treating it as the ideal dictionary, the ultimate repository of stories, themes and figures standing behind the Gospel of Matthew. Two results follow: (1) Scholars often find the target of a proposed allusion in the MT, employing phrases such as “the essential force of the Hebrew,” even when the text seems to point in a different direction, even when the proposed allusion or echo does not cohere well. (2) Extrabiblical traditions are not always taken seriously as potential targets of allusions, as possibilities for actualization as echoes.

Third, defining the Akedah and dating the development of its various aspects has proven theoretically and historically challenging. Most definitions of the Akedah concern some sort of vicariously atoning expiation as the *sine qua non* of the Akedah even though many versions emphasize other aspects. The real problem concerns the concept

of definition per se. It is more helpful to speak of family resemblances among various versions of the Akedah than to insist on a rigid definition, for this latter approach is exclusionary of much material that was available early and appropriated often, chiefly the concept of a willing and obedient Isaac.

Dating aspects of the Akedah is challenging, but for our purposes not as challenging as often assumed. One can demonstrate that the case for the early currency of certain aspects of the Akedah is stronger than many have thought. Further, while certain documents (such as *L.A.B.*, 4 Maccabees and *1 Clement*) may have been composed slightly later than the Gospel of Matthew and the story which it purports to tell, the aspects of the Akedah which these documents present do not bear the marks of innovation. They were thus likely available in the early Jewish encyclopedia relevant for interpreting the Matthean narrative. The depictions of or concise references to the Akedah in most documents examined here function as *explana*, not *explanata*, as resources appropriated, not novelties recently innovated. The Gospel itself may precede the *Antiquities* and *1 Clement*, for instance, by a mere ten years. Moreover, early dates for *L.A.B.* and 4 Maccabees are certainly possible if not indeed probable. On the basis of these and other documents, one may conclude that at least five aspects of the Akedah were present in the encyclopedia in which the Gospel of Matthew was composed, available for appropriation and appreciation: (1) an emphasis on Isaac's explicit willingness and active obedience (the most striking and well-defined aspect in the tradition and the most significant for the Gospel of Matthew); (2) an association of the Akedah with the site of the temple mount in Jerusalem; (3) an association of the Akedah with Passover; (4) various soteriological implications (blessing, election, expiation, exemplarism); and (5) the development of apocalyptic and theophanic elements.

Fourth, Matthean scholarship has shown significant preoccupation with the formula quotations, which results in the neglect of other forms of Matthean intertextuality. One result is the neglect of the phenomenon of Matthean allusion and the concomitant neglect of the Akedah, for the Akedah in the Gospel of Matthew is perceived only through the intertextual mechanism of allusion, not quotation. When coupled with the focus on the MT Hebrew Old Testament as the dominant dictionary, a second result is an overestimation of the role of the so-called Suffering Servant for the Gospel, as material from two "Servant Songs" is quoted. Even though it is likely that the Suffering Servant as

understood by modern scholarship is a largely meaningless concept for the investigation of Matthean Christology on a purely historical level, this figure has functioned to prevent scholars from perceiving a role for Isaac in the Gospel, since the Servant of modern scholarship and the figure of the Isaac of the Akedah compete to fill similar sacrificial and soteriological functions.

These blind spots necessitate the use of a heuristic framework which, while valid in its own right, would prove useful for investigating the Akedah in the Gospel of Matthew. Given its comprehensive, sophisticated and eclectic nature and given its concern for both narrative (the pole of the text) and cultural traditions (the pole of the encyclopedia), Umberto Eco's semiotic theory of the Model Reader proves helpful. The concept of the cultural encyclopedia permits and demands the consideration of extracanonical materials as potential allusive evocations and breaks the largely implicit but very real stranglehold of the MT form and content of the Old Testament over intertextual discussion. The concept of a Model Reader who reads the narrative in search for the intention of the text permits and demands the Gospel to be taken seriously as a coherent whole, thus allowing the cumulative force of potential allusions to and echoes of the figure of Isaac to be fully felt. Far from being a novelty of undisciplined literary theory run amok in Biblical studies, Eco's theory of the Model Reader considers the concept of the *intentio operis* as intrinsic and indispensable, a concept which permits and indeed requires aiming for determinacy in interpretation, insofar as that may be attained, thus meeting the demand routinely made by traditional Gospel scholars that interpretation worthy of the name be objective. If one remains concerned with the intent of the empirical author, however, one may cautiously assume that the Model Reader, the text and the Model Author stand in a direct indexical relationship with each other. Thus, having fully considered the entirety of the text as a narrative (the poetic function), one may then consider the relevance for the empirical author and his community's *Sitz im Leben* (the potential referential function).

When one therefore reads the Gospel of Matthew as a narrative with attention to the cultural encyclopedia within which it was first composed and received, within which it functions with efficiency and coherence, one perceives a significant Isaac typology that spans the breadth of the Gospel, from Jesus' miraculous conception and birth to his sacrificial death. In general terms, the Isaac of Jewish Scripture and tradition and the Matthean Jesus resemble each other to a remarkable degree. Both

Isaac and Jesus are promised children on whom depend the promises of God, beloved sons who go willingly and obediently to their sacrificial deaths at the season of Passover at the hands of their Fathers for the purposes of redemption at Jerusalem, in the vicinity of the temple.

As the Model Reader progresses through the Gospel of Matthew, the Model Reader encounters many interpretive nodes that involve inferential walks into the encyclopedia to consider the figure of Isaac, particularly various aspects of the Akedah. The cumulative clues compound, and by the time the Model Reader completes reading the Gospel, the Model Reader has perceived and actualized the typology.

Each section of the first chapter of the Gospel presents the possibility that Isaac is in play. "Son of Abraham" in Matt 1:1 could possibly point to an Isaac typology that would complement Jesus' role as "son of David." The genealogy (Matt 1:2–17) may involve a chronology that points to the Akedah. Most striking, however, was the unmistakable allusion to Gen 17:19 LXX in Matt 1:20–21, which presents the conception and birth of Jesus in the precise terms in which Isaac's conception and birth are presented.

Further clues compound in the body of the Gospel. Rather than recreating a speculative tradition history involving interpretive permutations of Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1, the most efficient solution to the intertextual question of the heavenly voice is to find a decisive and direct allusion to Gen 22:2, 11–12 and 15–16 LXX. The concept of threat present in the co-text of Matt 2–4 and the hints of the passion in Matt 4 in particular provides the thematic correspondence necessary to confirm the allusion to Gen 22. Moreover, hearing echoes of the Akedah here as an omen of death solves the narrative riddle concerning when and where the figure of Jesus receives his sacrificial commission, when and where the figure of Jesus realizes what he articulates in Matt 16:21 and subsequent passion predictions.

The same judgment regarding allusive intertextual possibilities holds with respect to the heavenly voice at the transfiguration. Gen 22 provides the most efficient solution. Further, the case for hearing echoes of the figure of Moses rests on weaker foundations than many assume. Since the co-text involves explicit predictions of Jesus' passion, the allusion to Gen 22 is confirmed and it appears the phrase "listen to him!" functions not to evoke Moses and bring to mind Jesus' general ethical teaching, but to remind Peter of the preceding passion prediction, to correct his *theologia gloriae* with a *theologia crucis*. The heavenly voice forms the

thematic and structural center of the passage and alludes to Gen 22; thus, Isaac is the decisive typical figure for the passage.

The presence of ὁ ἀγαπητός μου in the peculiar citation of Isa 42:1–4 in Matt 12:17–21 presents Jesus, the obedient Son like Isaac, as the embodiment of Israel, in contrast to the Pharisees, who are disobedient to the divine will to the extent of conspiring to murder Jesus (12:14). The point of the citation is not to present Jesus as the modern Suffering Servant, but to present Jesus as one who serves faithfully and one whose service will result in blessings for the Gentiles.

The Model Reader experiences further confirmation that Jesus is being presented as a new Isaac in reading the Passion Narrative. The first clue is the general obedience to his sacrificial calling Jesus displays throughout, an obedience starkly demonstrated through his actual control of events. Jesus does not simply resign himself to his fate, as if it were simply a matter of psychological preparation for and acceptance of the inevitable, but refuses the very real possibility of escape and actually orchestrates events to bring about his sacrificial death. The second clue is that Jesus' death is set firmly in a Passover context; he is to die at Passover, and the institution of his Eucharistic ritual wherein he describes himself as a covenantal sacrifice takes place precisely during that which the Gospel of Matthew explicitly describes as a Passover meal. Like Isaac, his sacrifice is paschal. The third clue concerns the Gethsemane and arrest sequence, which contains several allusions to Gen 22. It is not simply that these allusions function to "push thoughts" towards Isaac, however, in a haphazard, general fashion. In light of the apocalyptic worldview of the Gospel, the allusions and the echoes produced thereby reveal distinct parallels between the Matthean story and the story of the Akedah. The Model Reader perceives that God here fully takes on the role of Abraham, wielding the crowd with its μάχαιραι and ξύλα to bring about the sacrifice of his beloved Son Jesus, just as Abraham wielded the μάχαιραι and prepared the ξύλα to bring about the sacrifice of his beloved son Isaac.

In light of the many allusions to Isaac material (Gen 17 and 22) in the Gospel of Matthew and in light of the striking conceptual similarities between the Matthean Jesus and the Isaac of Jewish Scripture and tradition, it is reasonable to conclude that Isaac is a significant typological figure for the Gospel. The Gospel all but demands Isaac's actualization, as the Matthean Jesus' birth and death reflect Isaac's birth and death in various ways. In comparison with other proposed figures

of typological significance for the Gospel of Matthew—Moses and the Suffering Servant, for example—Isaac appears every bit as important, if not more so. One finds just as much compelling verbal and thematic evidence for a role for Isaac in the Gospel of Matthew as one does for other figures long thought decisive.

11.2 CONCERNS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION: SOTERIOLOGY AND TEMPLE

In light of the history of Matthean scholarship, the present project has had as its first and foremost task the simple demonstration that the Isaac is “there” in the Gospel of Matthew, that Isaac is a significant typological figure for Matthean Christology. It is appropriate, however, to engage in some deeper reflection and ask broader questions pertaining to the role and function of the figure of Isaac for the Gospel of Matthew that I have touched upon in the various exegetical sections. Given that hearing echoes of Isaac’s birth and binding makes good sense in several particular loci in the Gospel and given that the Matthean Jesus and the Isaac of Jewish Scripture and tradition resemble each other to a large degree, we may ask what difference the Isaac typology might make for interpreting the Gospel as a whole. Two related areas merit further, if brief, attention.

11.2.1 *The Figure of Isaac and the Shape of Matthean Soteriology*

First is the question of the shape of Matthean soteriology. Unfortunately, relatively little of a comprehensive character seems to have been written pertaining to the mechanics of Jesus’ sacrificial death in the Gospel of Matthew; the issue is not a central concern of major Matthean scholars. A most striking example is Luz’s *Theology of Matthew*, which contains no discussion of the topic. A survey of the table of contents and the index finds no mention of “atonement,” “death of Jesus,” “salvation,” “sacrifice” or the like. The chapter “Passion and Easter (Matthew 26–28)” is composed of two sections, “Israel’s Rejection” and “The Disciples’ Path to the Gentiles.”¹ In other works (such as essays or commentaries) one often finds cursory and somewhat superficial statements regarding

¹ Luz, *Theology*, 133–41.

Matthean soteriology which either merely restate what a verse or passage in question says on its face or suffer a certain imprecision. For instance, with reference to the word over the cup at the Last Supper (Matt 26:28), John Carroll and Joel Green write, "Somehow, in the mystery of the divine action, the death of Jesus fulfills his mission, embodied in his very name, to effect the salvation of the people through the forgiveness of their sins (cf. 1:21)."² While one should not attempt to treat the Gospel of Matthew as a work of highly sophisticated systematic theology and read more into the text than the text itself permits and requires, one may inquire as far as possible into the mystery of the "Somehow," asking how Matthean soteriology might function and what role Isaac might play therein. In similar fashion, Davies and Allison merely assert that the phrase "for the forgiveness of sins" in Matt 26:28 "underlines that the death of Jesus is soteriological, a deliverance from slavery to sin... Jesus saves his people from their sins by dying for them and so permits a new relationship with God."³ Their formulation in the former phrase is rather imprecise; many theologians from many centuries have formulated many varieties of soteriology. The latter phrase, with its pietistic overtones, implies an individualistic sort of soteriology involving some sort of vague expiatory or propitiatory mechanism.

Most Matthean scholars, operating on a redaction-critical paradigm, are concerned with the story behind the Matthean story, presumably the story of the struggle of the Matthean community against its parent body. Thus, Matthean issues such as the definition, role and function of Israel, Gentiles, the synagogue and the church receive the bulk of academic attention. Although redaction criticism claims to be concerned for theology, the search for the Matthean community has precluded significant consideration of traditional theological concerns like soteriology.⁴ This is true even of Luz, who has shown ever increasing

² John T. Carroll and Joel B. Green, "His Blood on Us and On Our Children: The Death of Jesus in the Gospel according to Matthew," in *The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity* (John T. Carroll and Joel B. Green, eds.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995), 44.

³ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 3:474. A recent article by Boris Repschinski, "For He Will Save His People from Their Sins' (Matthew 1:21): A Christology for Christian Jews," *CBQ* 68 (2006): 248–55, goes further and aims at a systematic examination of the relevant Matthean data, but also strikes an overly pietist note in claiming that "[t]he salvation brought in by the passion of Jesus is the forgiveness of sins that sets the believer into a new relationship with God" (261).

⁴ Another reason might involve the tendency to see Paul as the New Testament theologian *par excellence* but the (synoptic) Gospels as resources for reconstructing the history of Jesus of Nazareth and the earliest church.

concern for the narrative dynamics of Matthew and whose book *The Theology of Matthew* is entitled *Die Jesusgeschichte des Matthäus* in the original German.⁵ When read as the narrative the Gospel of Matthew is, however, bracketing and postponing investigation of its historical and referential functions, we learn that the fundamental plot of the Gospel concerns soteriology. Powell writes:

[A]n examination of Matthew's plot from the perspective of causality reveals that this story is not fundamentally about how the Gospel passed from Israel to the nations but about how Jesus came to save his people from their sins. The plot of Matthew's Gospel describes how this purpose came to be fulfilled, to some extent in Jesus' ministry, but, ultimately, only in his death.⁶

Such a judgment is based on "the most significant and explicit causal statements," which direct attention to Jesus' salvific mission.⁷ In the very first chapter, the Gospel describes Jesus' ministry as saving his people from their sins (1:21); in 9:13, Jesus states that he came to call sinners; in 20:28 Jesus states he will give his life as a ransom for many; and in 26:28 Jesus declares his covenantal blood will be shed for many for the forgiveness of sins.

A few commentators have attempted to elucidate Matthean soteriology with more precision. Gerhardsson presents a view congenial to modern desacralized Protestantism, which emphasizes the "spiritualization"⁸ of sacrifice. Gerhardsson asserts, "Matthew tends throughout his Gospel to present Jesus more as a typical than an exclusive figure, and to play down the historical 'once for all' in favour of heavenly ideals which have a timeless, or more correctly, a general and permanent validity."⁹ The passage concerning plucking grain on

⁵ Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1993.

⁶ Powell, "The Plot and Subplots of Matthew's Gospel," *NTS* 38 (1992): 196. Interestingly, Matera puts forth the opposite view, asserting that the plot "has something to do with salvation history," that the Gospel of Matthew "can be read as a story whose plot concerns Israel's rejection of the Messiah and the consequent movement of the gospel to the Gentiles" ("The Plot of Matthew's Gospel," *CBQ* 49 [1987]: 243, 252–53, respectively).

⁷ Powell, "Plot and Subplots," 195.

⁸ On the difficulties concerning the "spiritualization" of sacrifice, see Jonathan Klawans, "Interpreting the Last Supper: Sacrifice, Spiritualization, and Anti-Sacrifice," *NTS* 48 (2002): 1–17; and idem, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), esp. 213–45.

⁹ Gerhardsson, "Sacrificial Service and Atonement in the Gospel of Matthew," in *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology pre-*

the Sabbath (Matt 12:1–8) is central: “It seems to me indubitable that the comparison here is between two kinds of worship: the *latreia* which the priests perform in the temple, and the *latreia* in which Jesus and his disciples are engaged.”¹⁰ The quotation from Hos 6:6 in Matt 12:7 (ἔλεος θέλω καὶ οὐ θυσίαν) contrasts “on one hand, the outward sacrificial service, and, on the other, the perfect spiritual sacrifice that Jesus and his disciples are offering and which is characterized by ‘mercy’.”¹¹ Finding that worship as obedience to God’s word (*latreia*) coincides with service of human beings (*diakonia*) in the Gospel of Matthew, Gerhardsson contends that “Jesus’ sacrifice of his life is presented as an act of obedience towards God, done on behalf of mankind. That which is to take place on Golgotha is not the offering of a sacrificial lamb to achieve a settlement between God and his people. Jesus himself will give (δοῦναι) his life as a ransom for many.”¹² Further, Jesus’ death is not unique: “In spite of his eagerness to demonstrate that Jesus’ death was at all points perfect, Matthew shows no inclination to clearly distinguish Jesus’ sacrificial death from the martyrdom of his followers”;¹³ the difference between Jesus and his followers is a difference of degree, not kind, involving his perfection and the church’s frailty.¹⁴

Gerhardsson does believe that the Gospel presents Jesus as a perfect sacrifice, but what that might mean is left largely unexplored, as revealed by his hesitant language. In his view, the empirical Matthew attempts to demonstrate

that Jesus now presents himself as a perfect sacrifice, and that this sacrifice is complete and blameless even unto death. The “Son of God” takes it upon himself to subordinate his will to that of his heavenly Father (*latreuein*), in order, by so doing, to benefit mankind (*diakonein*). Probably Matthew means that Jesus’ unlimited obedience to God makes his sacrifice perfect, and that this divine identity gives the sacrifice universal application.¹⁵

For Gerhardsson, Jesus’ sacrificial death is largely an extension of his general obedience to his Father and service to humanity, and because of

sented to L. L. Morris on his 60th Birthday (ed. Robert Banks; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 26.

¹⁰ Ibid., 28.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 30.

¹³ Ibid., 33.

¹⁴ Ibid., 34.

¹⁵ Ibid., 30.

his modernist liberal Protestant reading, he does not and cannot make much of the significance and mechanics of Jesus' sacrificial death.

Warren Carter is another who has endeavored to explore Matthean soteriology and, like Gerhardsson, has a broad, comprehensive view thereof. In Carter's view, salvation involves not simply expiation or propitiation but the entire cosmos. Jesus' mission involves liberation from the effects of imperial domination and political oppression, including such things as sickness and poverty.¹⁶ Carter argues more or less persuasively that salvation from sin involves the destruction of sinful, oppressive structures, but the implication is that Jesus' death is a result, not a means, of his liberating ministry. Carter writes, "[Jesus'] death, a ransom for many (20:28), shows that the worst the religious and political elite can do can not limit God's sovereignty since God raises Jesus from death."¹⁷ The elites of Jewish and Roman spheres of power conspire to murder Jesus, but God vindicates him.

To this it must be said that Jesus' sacrificial death in the Gospel of Matthew is indeed a divine necessity (δεῖ, 16:21), not simply something imposed upon the human Jesus from the outside, an accidental event resulting from conflict with Jewish and Roman authorities. The Isaac typology means that Jesus' sacrifice is the divine will: "This is my beloved Son" is an omen of death, a divine sacrificial commission given to the Matthean Jesus at the baptism. Further, the concept of a Christus Victor model of atonement remains largely unexplored, which could be of great interest since, in Carter's view, "Rome's rule manifests Satan's empire."¹⁸

In light of the Gospel's thoroughgoing apocalypticism and in light of the association of the Akedah with deliverance from enemies heavenly and earthly (one thinks here especially of *Jubilees* and 4 Maccabees), however, appropriating a Christus Victor model as a heuristic framework for reflection upon Matthean soteriology may prove fruitful. Powell rightly observes that

¹⁶ See Carter, "To save his people," 379–401; idem, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); idem, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2001); and idem, "Matthew and the Gentiles: Individual Conversion and/or Systemic Transformation?" *JSNT* 26 (2004): 259–82.

¹⁷ Carter, "To save his people," 397–98.

¹⁸ Ibid., 390. In other works Carter does pay significant attention more precisely to the implications and mechanics of Jesus' sacrificial death. See, for instance, *Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist*, 211–25.

neither Jesus' conflict with the religious leaders nor his conflict with his own disciples is ultimately definitive of Matthew's plot. What this narrative is really about is conflict on a deeper level, conflict between God and Satan...Significantly, the narrative portrays Jesus as engaging in conflict with Satan that is direct and confrontational before it describes his first encounter either with the disciples (4.18) or the religious leaders (9.3-4).¹⁹

What might it mean, then, that Jesus will "save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21) and that forgiveness of sins is achieved through the shedding of his blood (26:28)?

Most modern readers' first instincts here probably involve thinking in terms of some vague sort of substitutionary atonement, that the blood of Jesus pacifies the divine wrath. As true as this might be with regard to certain brands of Christian theology and with regard to the Gospel of Matthew (for one soteriological model need not exclude another), the center of gravity of the soteriological emphasis of the Gospel of Matthew seems to lie elsewhere. The characters who bear the brunt of Jesus' wrath—and thus those who presumably stand in danger of feeling the force of the divine wrath—are those who oppose Jesus. (One thinks here of the Barthian idea that divine love is experienced as wrath when it encounters resistance.) Rather, in light of the dualism inherent in Matthean apocalypticism, in light of the Christus Victor model the Gospel seems to suggest, Jesus' sacrifice seems directed at the devil. Perhaps Carter is right when he concentrates on the divine vindication of Jesus through the mechanism of the resurrection: the worst the enemies of Jesus (and the devil, who ultimately stands behind them) can do is execute him cruelly and shamefully. The resurrection, an eternal reversal of that crime which does not simply revivify Jesus with *bios* but raises him to the new realm of *zōē* (cf. Matt 25:46, remembering that Jesus is the paradigm of the righteous!), is the ultimate, decisive defeat of Satan and his unwitting human minions.²⁰

And yet Jesus' sacrifice is directed towards God as well, but in a way that coheres well with the well-known Matthean emphasis on the divine

¹⁹ Powell, "Plot and Subplots," 198.

²⁰ One thinks here of N. T. Wright's ideas that "forgiveness of sins" concerns return from exile (*The New Testament and the People of God* [Christian Origins and the Question of God 1; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992], 244-338) and that Jesus' triumph over evil consists in his refusal to play the game according to the satanic rules of his enemies (*Jesus and the Victory of God* [Christian Origins and the Question of God 2; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997], esp. 592-611).

presence (Matt 1:23, 20:28). Jonathan Klawans has recently issued an important book in which he argues in a compelling manner that sacrifice in ancient Judaism was (1) a matter of imitating God and (2) a means of attracting and maintaining the divine presence.²¹

Klawans notes that ritual impurity concerns issues of sex and death. Why do such issues make for impurity? The answer is that participation in sex and death is that which makes one least like God. Klawans writes:

In other words, the point of following these [ritual purity] regulations is nothing other than the theological underpinning of the entire Holiness Code: *imitatio Dei* (Lev. 11:44–45, 19:2, 20:7, 26). Only a heightened, god-like state—the state of ritual purity—made one eligible to enter the sanctuary, God’s holy residence on earth.²²

That priests imitate God is shown by verses that depict the God of Israel performing activities pertinent to sacrifice. Passages which envision God as a shepherd (e.g., Ps 23:1–2, 95:7; Isa 40:11; Ezek 34:15–16) parallel flesh and blood shepherds tending their flocks, including those animals which will be used as sacrificial victims.²³ In the act of sacrifice in the sanctuary, the priests exercise life and death power over the victims in the same way God exercises the power of life and death over humans (Deut 32:39; 1 Sam 2:6).²⁴ After the victim is slaughtered, the priests divide it (Lev 1:6), perhaps analogous to how God examines or tests the “kidneys” and “heart” (e.g., Jer 11:20, 17:10, 20:12).²⁵ The priest manipulates blood (Lev 1:5); God manipulates blood, the text employing sacrificial terms to describe such (Isa 34:6–7, 63:1–6).²⁶ This explains why, on one hand, death renders one impure, but, on the other hand, the temple has sacrificial ritual—death—at its center.

But what does sacrifice do? Following Baruch Levine,²⁷ Klawans asserts that sacrifice attracts and maintains the presence of the divinity, observing that the divine presence manifests itself upon the correct

²¹ Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*. See esp. ch. 2, “The Sacrificial Process of Ancient Israel,” pp. 49–73.

²² *Ibid.*, 58.

²³ *Ibid.*, 58–61.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 58.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 64.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 64–65.

²⁷ Baruch Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord: A Study of Cult and Some Cultic Terms in Ancient Israel* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 22–27; *idem*, “On the Presence of God in Biblical Religion,” in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough* (ed. Jacob Neusner; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 79–80.

completion of a sacrificial ritual (Exod 24:17; Lev 9:22–24; Judg 13:19–21; 1 Chr 21:26; 1 Kgs 18:38). The clearest instance of this idea in the Bible is found in Exod 29:41–46:

And the other lamb you shall offer in the evening, and shall offer with it a grain offering and its drink offering, as in the morning, for a pleasing odor, an offering by fire to the LORD. It shall be a regular burnt offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there. I will meet with the Israelites there, and it shall be sanctified by my glory; I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate, to serve me as priests. I will dwell among the Israelites, and I will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them; I am the LORD their God.²⁸

If proper ritual performance attracts and maintains the divine presence, moral defilement threatens it. According to Klawans, three grave and heinous sins defile: idolatry, sexual transgression and murder.²⁹ Consider Num 35:30–34:

If anyone kills another, the murderer shall be put to death on the evidence of witnesses; but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of a single witness. Moreover you shall accept no ransom for the life of a murderer who is subject to the death penalty; a murderer must be put to death. Nor shall you accept ransom for one who has fled to a city of refuge, enabling the fugitive to return to live in the land before the death of the high priest. You shall not pollute the land in which you live; for blood pollutes the land, and no expiation can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it. You shall not defile the land in which you live, in which I also dwell; for I the LORD dwell among the Israelites.

Whereas ritual defilement threatens those individuals directly involved, moral defilement threatens sanctuary and nation. Klawans writes:

The moral defilements threaten not only the status of the individuals in question but also the land and in turn the sanctuary itself. Unlike the ritual impurities, the moral impurities bring with them not just the danger that sacred precincts might be violated but also the threat that god

²⁸ Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 69–70. As an extrabiblical example, Klawans cites the Babylonian (Ninevite) version of the Epic of Gilgamesh, 155–61: “I let out to the four winds and I offered a sacrifice. I made an offering at the mountain top...the gods smelled (its) sweet savor. The gods, like flies, around the offerer gathered” (cited p. 69).

²⁹ Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 70.

will depart from the sacred precincts altogether...the moral impurities, unlike the ritual impurities, are referred to as abominations. These things are repugnant to God; they are repulsive, repellent. So we can also now see better how the moral defilements are related to sacrifice. Abominable acts undo what properly performed sacrifice does. Sacrifice attracts and maintains the divine presence; moral defilement resulting from grave sin repels the divine presence.³⁰

Josephus bears witness to this idea as well.³¹ In *Ant.* 3.202–203, God comes to dwell in the sanctuary, the microcosmos. Josephus also records the result of gruesome acts occurring in the vicinity of the temple and the temple itself in passages such as *J.W.* 4.151 and 4.313. In his view, such actions defiled Jerusalem and her temple:

[T]he whole city was a scene of dejection, and among the moderates there was not one who was not racked with the thought that he would personally have to suffer for the rebels' crime. For, to add to its heinousness, the massacre took place on the sabbath. (*J.W.* 2.455–56)³²

[G]luttled with the wrongs which they [the "brigands"] had done to men, they transferred their insolence to the Deity and with polluted feet invaded the sanctuary. (*J.W.* 4.150)

As a result, God abandons the temple:

My belief, therefore, is that the Deity has fled from the holy places and taken His stand on the side of those with whom you are now at war. (*J.W.* 5.412)

Moreover, at the feast which is called Pentecost, the priests on entering the inner court of the temple by night, as their custom was in the discharge of their ministrations, reported that they were conscious, first of a commotion and a din, and after that of a voice as of a host, "We are departing hence." (*J.W.* 6.300)

They [the "brigands"] committed these murders not only in other parts of the city but even in some cases in the temple; for there too they made bold to slaughter their victims, for they did not regard even this as a desecration. This is the reason why, in my opinion, even God Himself, for loathing of their impiety, turned away from our city and, because He deemed the temple to be no longer a clean dwelling place for him, brought the Romans upon us and purification by fire upon the city. (*Ant.* 20.166)³³

³⁰ Ibid., 71.

³¹ For what follows, see *ibid.*, 116.

³² All translations of *J.W.* are from Thackeray, LCL.

³³ Trans. Feldman, LCL.

These ideas are suggestive for a fruitful reading of Matthean soteriology. The Matthean Jesus assumes that God dwells in the temple: “and whoever swears by the sanctuary (ναός), swears by it and by the one who dwells in it” (Matt 23:21). The Matthean narrator relates that at the moment of Jesus’ death, “the curtain of the temple (ναός) was torn in two, from top to bottom” (27:51).³⁴ Although much popular Christian piety explains the significance of the curtain’s tearing in terms of Jesus’ death opening up access to God (an interpretation which does justice neither to the Jewish understanding and practice of sacrifice and the temple nor the original Bible, the portion of the Christian Scriptures called the Old Testament; as if Jews had no prior access to God, mediated though it was!), it is better to see the tearing of the veil in the Gospel of Matthew as indicating God’s abandoning of the sanctuary as recompense for the murder of Jesus.³⁵ Jesus dies; God flees.³⁶

But to where? Where might the divine presence be found? The Matthean answer is Christological: Jesus is the locus of the divine presence. The parade examples of this are found in the first and last chapters. Jesus is to be called Emmanuel, God with us (Matt 1:23); Jesus’ presence requires no edifice but a minimum of followers (Matt 18:20); Jesus promises to be with the Eleven to the consummation of the age (Matt 28:20; and, by extension, their followers who will constitute the church; cf. 16:18, 18:15–22). But, as we have seen, the Matthean transfiguration also suggests that the divine presence, after the resurrection, will center on

³⁴ Indeed, the tearing of the curtain is a sign of the temple’s coming destruction, as certain extrabiblical texts indicate. In *2 Bar.* 6:7–9, the earth swallows the temple veil and the sacred vessels before the temple is trampled; in *Liv. Pro.* 12:12, the shredding of the veil is associated with the temple’s destruction. See Catherine Sider Hamilton, “‘His Blood Be upon Us’: Innocent Blood and the Death of Jesus in Matthew,” *CBQ* 70 (2008): 97.

³⁵ Pace Daniel M. Gurtner, *The Torn Veil: Matthew’s Exposition of the Death of Jesus* (SNTSMS 139; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); in Judaism, access to God, as it were, is mediated, as it is in most forms of Christianity in history and today. In *2 Bar.* 6:7–9 the earth’s swallowing of the veil and *Liv. Pro.* 12:12 the shredding of the veil is associated with the departure of the divine glory (see again Sider Hamilton, “‘His Blood Be upon Us,’” 97). Further, God’s departing the sanctuary coheres with the Spirit’s departing the heavens (Matt 3:16) and the risen Jesus having departed the tomb (Matt 28). Nobody is where he belongs; each person of the Trinity is on the loose, as it were.

³⁶ Although this passage should be read in this way, the Gospel of Matthew does not envision a perpetual curse on the Jewish people *per se*, nor should practicing Christians believe that God has forsaken his Jewish people. By no means (Rom 11:1)! On the terrible cry of Matt 27:25, see John Paul Heil, “The Blood of Jesus in Matthew: A Narrative-Critical Perspective,” *PRSt* 18 (1991): 117–24; and Sider Hamilton, “‘His Blood Be upon Us,’” 82–100.

Jesus, who, after all, is God incarnate (Matt 1:18–25). One might say, then, that Jesus, as willing priest but also victim, imitates God (Klawans's understanding of the concept of *imitatio dei*) by sacrificing himself, obediently and willingly, and, as a result, secures and also mediates the divine presence for those who would be part of his community, his church, as he promised to her first leaders. Exploring these Matthean ideas in more detail brings us to an examination of the Matthean Jesus' relationship to the temple.

11.2.2 *Jesus, Isaac and the Temple*

A second question which concerns the Akedah is Jesus' relation to the temple in the Gospel of Matthew. If the above is correct, the Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus as a replacement for the temple, as a new and decisive temple. And if that is the case, it makes good sense for the Gospel to present Jesus as a new Isaac, since the Akedah was associated with the temple and was indeed the paradigm of sacrifice.

While many scholars have investigated the significance of the temple incident in terms of historical Jesus studies, fewer have paid attention to the position of Jesus vis-à-vis the temple at the level of particular Gospels.³⁷ As noted, the temple was thought to be the dwelling place of God,³⁸ whether the temple in a given text was conceived of as a microcosm or as an analogue to the heavenly temple,³⁹ a datum assumed by the Matthean Jesus (Matt 23:21). Further, the temple was the place where all of Judaism—including those Jews in the Diaspora—participated in the expiatory rites through the temple tax, the half-shekel payment of Exod 30:13, incumbent upon all from twenty years of age, which served “to make atonement for your lives” (עַל-נַפְשֵׁיכֶם לְכַפֵּר/ἐξιλάσασθαι περὶ τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν; Exod 30:15, 16).⁴⁰ Josephus records that the

³⁷ For historical Jesus studies, see Marcus J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1984) and E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985). See also Hooker, “Traditions about the Temple in the Sayings of Jesus,” *BJRL* 70 (1988): 7–19.

³⁸ Cf. 1 Sam 22:27; 1 Kgs 8:48, 9:3; Ps 11:4, 18:6, 76:1–2; Isa 6:1–5; Ezek 43:6–7; Mic 1:2; Hab 2:20; Mal 3:1; 1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16; Rev 7:15. See also Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1985), 111–41.

³⁹ See Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 111–44.

⁴⁰ For what follows, see Jostein Ådna, “Jesus' Symbolic Act in the Temple (Mark 11:15–17): The Replacement of the Sacrificial Cult by his Atoning Death,” in *Gemeinde ohne Tempel/Community without Temple: Zur Substituierung und Transformation des Jerusalemer Tempels und seines Kultes im Alten Testament, antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum* (ed. Beate Ego, Armin Lange and Peter Pilhofer; WUNT 118; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 461–76.

Jews of Mesopotamia and Babylon would store up the tax and send it to Jerusalem at the proper time, for “it is the national custom for all to contribute to the cause of God, as well as any other dedicatory offerings” (*Ant.* 18:312–13).⁴¹ With regard to this tax, Philo reports that

practically in every city there are banking places for the holy money where people regularly come and give their offerings. And at stated times there are appointed to carry the sacred tribute envoys selected on their merits, from every city those of the highest repute, under whose conduct the hopes of each and all will travel safely.⁴² (*Spec.* 1.78)

[Caesar] knew also that they were in the habit of contributing sacred sums of money from their first fruits and sending them to Jerusalem by the hands of those who were to conduct the sacrifices.⁴³ (*Legat.* 156)

Persons on pilgrimage to the temple during Passover could also pay the tax directly.⁴⁴

A major function which the temple tax supported was the twice-daily offering of the Tamid lambs. While there is debate regarding whether the Tamid sacrifices and the Passover sacrifices were regarded as expiatory, Philo refers to them as λύτρα: “We are meant to consecrate one half of it, the drachma, and pay it as ransom for our own soul (λύτρα τῆς ἑαυτῶν ψυχῆς κατατιθέντες), which God... releases with a mighty hand from the cruel and bitter tyranny of passions and wrongdoings” (*Her.* 186);⁴⁵ “These contributions are called ‘ransom-money’ (αἱ δ’ εἰσφοραὶ λύτρα προσονομάζονται)” (*Spec.* 1.78).⁴⁶ The book of *Jubilees*, for its part, is explicit about the atoning efficacy of the Tamid:

And there is no limit of days for this law because it is forever. They shall keep it for their generations so that they might make supplication on your behalf with blood before the altar on every day. And at the hour of daybreak and evening they will seek atonement on their own behalf continually before the LORD so that they might guard it and not be rooted out. (6:14)

This work alone shall be done on the day of the sabbath in the sanctuary of the LORD your God so that they might atone for Israel (with) continual gift day by day for an acceptable memorial before the LORD. And so that he might accept them forever, day by day, just as he commanded you. (50:11)

⁴¹ Trans. Feldman, LCL.

⁴² Trans. Colson, LCL.

⁴³ Trans. Colson, LCL.

⁴⁴ Ádna, “Jesus’ Symbolic Act,” 467.

⁴⁵ Trans. Colson and Whitaker, LCL.

⁴⁶ Trans. Colson, LCL.

The Matthean Jesus replaces both these functions of the temple. Stanton observes, "In a series of striking passages disciples of Jesus (and their later followers) are promised that Jesus will be present with them in their community life in ways analogous to the ways God was understood to be present in temple and synagogue."⁴⁷ The Matthean Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us (1:23). The transfiguration suggests Jesus will be the locus of the divine presence after the resurrection as well (Matt 17:1–8). His presence depends not on a particular sacred location but the presence of a minimum of disciples (18:20). The rending of the "curtain of the temple" (καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ, Matt 27:51) indicates that God's presence has departed the sanctuary and now is to be found in Jesus and his community. It also "signifies the end of the earthly Temple service and judgment upon Judaism."⁴⁸ The final words of the Gospel of Matthew are Jesus' promise to be with the disciples until the consummation of the age (28:20). The Gospel suggests that the locus of God's presence is in Jesus and will continue to be after the destruction of the temple.

It is not that Jesus is another locus of God's presence or a special locus of God's presence in addition to the temple, or that his sacrifice is complementary to those of the temple.⁴⁹ While the historical Jesus may have had a positive attitude towards the temple,⁵⁰ the Jesus of the Gospel of Matthew does not by the time the Model Reader arrives at the closing movements of the narrative. It is not a matter, however, of the "spiritualization" of sacrifice, the supremacy of inner piety and works of mercy over and against sacrificial ritual. Gerhardsson writes, "The Matthean Jesus does not disapprove of the Temple and its outward

⁴⁷ Stanton, "Synagogue and Church," 129–30. Stanton lists 8:23–27; 14:22–33; 18:20 and 28:20.

⁴⁸ Dahl, "Passion Narrative" 63.

⁴⁹ Pace Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 214–22. Klawans argues that the historical Jesus' actions at the Last Supper were not meant to imply that he was a substitute or replacement for the temple, but that he was simply extending the temple into another realm of life, as did other Jews in various ways, such as the Pharisees or the Qumran community: "The Last Supper traditions, in their various forms, fit well within the context of ancient Jewish applications of temple significance to nontemple rituals. And thus the historical Last Supper was most likely not an antitemple symbolic action. 'This too is divine service' is probably what and all Jesus originally intended to say" (244). However true this may be with regard to the historical Jesus, the Gospel of Matthew presents a different picture.

⁵⁰ See, for instance, James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991) and Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*.

sacrificial service, but he puts them in their place”;⁵¹ given the decisive significance of the temple, it is not simply something that can so easily be “put in its place.” Any relativization would be an effectual renunciation. The Matthean Jesus, at any rate, does not relativize the temple. Rather, he condemns it, predicts its destruction, and replaces it.

Most scholars understand the incident in the temple as the Matthean Jesus’ condemnation of the temple (Matt 21:12–16). The Matthean Jesus clearly predicts the destruction of the temple in 24:1–2, and in light of this and the references to the temple as an οἶκος in 12:4 and 21:13, his prediction regarding Jerusalem that “your house (οἶκος) is left to you desolate” (23:38) most likely refers to the temple. The Matthean Jesus is charged with claiming to be able to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days (26:61)—a charge brought by two witnesses (the minimum for just legal action; cf. Deut 17:6–7, 19:15; Num 35:30; Matt 18:16) whom the Matthean text does not describe as false.⁵²

Indeed, the scene of Jesus’ trial is decisive for perceiving the Matthean theme of Jesus as a new temple. In Matt 26:59 the narrator relates that the chief priests and the Sanhedrin were seeking false evidence to have Jesus killed, and 26:60a relates that many false witnesses did in fact come forward, but no false evidence was found (καὶ οὐχ εὑρόν) sufficient to secure the quasi-judicial murder of Jesus. But then in 26:60b the tone changes: ὅστερον δὲ suggests a new stage in the process, and the prefix ψευδο- is now nowhere to be found, although it has appeared twice in 26:59–60a. The language employed is direct: “Coming forward, two said, ‘This man said...’” (προσελθόντες δύο εἶπαν· οὗτος ἔφη). The terse language suggests that Jesus did in fact say what follows: “I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.”⁵³ These weighty words of the Matthean Jesus (though never directly on his lips) merit close examination.

First, not only does the scene itself in Matt 26:57–63a subtly suggest that the Model Reader should understand that Jesus did in fact

⁵¹ Gerhardtsson, “Sacrificial Service and Atonement in the Gospel of Matthew,” 28.

⁵² Hooker writes, “Matthew does not describe the two witnesses who report Jesus’ saying about the Temple as false (indeed, he seems to distinguish them from the false witnesses of v. 60) and apparently they agree in their testimony... Since Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God, of course he is able to destroy the temple and build it again if he wishes to do so” (“Traditions,” 12).

⁵³ Gundry observes, “Mark says that the Sanhedrin sought true testimony and found false, Matthew that they sought false testimony and found true” (*Matthew*, 542).

claim such a thing at some point,⁵⁴ but intratextual connections to other Matthean passages point in this direction as well. With regard to the first word of the charge, δύνάμαι, “I am able,” Jesus is able to cleanse a leper (8:2–4; κύριε, ἐὰν θέλῃς δύνασαί με καθαρίσαι, v. 2), asks if the two blind believe he is able to restore their sight (9:27–31; δύνάμαι, v. 28), and declares that he is able to call upon twelve legions of angels to deliver him if he so willed (δύνάμαι, 26:53). In the latter two instances, Jesus himself has uttered δύνάμαι in the first person; thus it is not incredible that he would have uttered the words of Matt 26:60b. Further, the taunt in Matt 27:40, “You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself,” reveals that in the world of the Matthean narrative Jesus was thought to have made the claim, a verse which “leaves the impression that Jesus’ words about the temple were well known.”⁵⁵

Second, given Jesus’ words about the temple’s destruction in Matt 24 and the divine abandonment of the temple at Jesus’ crucifixion, the primary referent of the “temple of God” in question in Matt 26:61 is likely the literal temple complex, not Jesus’ resurrected body, which is its secondary referent.⁵⁶ The destruction of the temple is in the Gospel divine recompense (indeed, Jesus’ own recompense as the Son of God, since he is indeed “able to destroy the temple of God”) for Jesus’ murder.⁵⁷ Further, texts such as 2 Sam 7, Zech 6:9–15 (esp. v. 12), *Tg. Zech.* 6:12–13, *Tg. Isa.* 53:5 and *Sib. Or.* 5:422 concern the son of David building or rebuilding of the temple, which suggests that Jesus as son of David and son of God does indeed have the power to destroy and rebuild the “temple.” This is why the high priest asks Jesus if he is indeed “the Christ [i.e., the son of David], the Son of God” (Matt 26:63).⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Especially when compared to the Markan parallel in Mark 14:53–60a, on which see Gundry, *Matthew*, 540–44.

⁵⁵ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 3:525 n. 29.

⁵⁶ Pace, *inter alios*, Gundry, *Matthew*, 542–43 and Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 3:526; see Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 436; and Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 2:426.

⁵⁷ As Davies and Allison observe, “Here the charge [of Matt 27:40] may be laden with irony. For the text may assume that the rejection of Jesus led to Jerusalem’s misfortunes in AD 70; if so, it follows that those mocking Jesus as him who would take down the temple are themselves responsible for the temple’s destruction” (*Saint Matthew*, 3:618).

⁵⁸ See Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 3:528; and Gundry, *Matthew*, 543: the text has “the effect of drawing close together the preceding questions about Jesus’ ability to destroy God’s Temple and build it in three days and the following adjuration concerning Jesus’ being the Messiah, God’s Son.”

Third, however, Jesus is indeed the temple in the second part of the accusation: "...and build it in three days." The shift may seem awkward but works well if one appreciates the irony involved: "I am able to destroy what you think of as the temple of God, but in three days rebuild the ultimate temple of God, my resurrection body." "Three days" implies that Jesus' resurrected body is the ultimate temple (cf. Matt 12:40 and 27:63–64). Thus, "temple of God" in the first part of the phrase has a double meaning: both the physical temple complex which will be destroyed but also Jesus as the authentic "temple of God" which will be raised. As Gundry observes, "temple of God" in 26:61 is parallel to "Son of God" in 26:63 and thus "temple" and "Son" are identical.⁵⁹ In sum, the Matthean text implies that Jesus claimed to be a new temple.

The first indication of the temple's destruction in the Gospel of Matthew, however, may come as early as 5:18: "For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished." The phrase "heaven and earth" may refer not to the cosmos in its entirety, the space-time universe, but to the temple, which some understood as the center of the cosmos.⁶⁰ Matt 5:17–20 is a difficult passage, but understanding 5:18 in this way makes coherent sense. If the phrase refers to the end of the space-time cosmos, the two "untils" of 5:18 make little sense (ἕως ἂν παρέλθῃ ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ... ἕως ἂν πάντα γένηται). Meier writes:

Granted the apocalyptic atmosphere of the first century A.D., the prophetic-apocalyptic context of the whole of chapter 5 and of the whole of Matthew's gospel, we should be careful not to reduce "till heaven and earth pass away" to a bland "never." Rather, it states that the truth expressed in the main clause (5:18c: not the slightest element shall pass from the Law) is restricted temporally. Not the slightest part of the Law shall pass away until the apocalyptic event of the passing away of the old world.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Gundry, *Matthew*, 542–43.

⁶⁰ Pace Jonathan T. Pennington, *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew* (NovTSup 126; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2007), 153, 200; see Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "The Destruction of the Temple and the Relativization of the Old Covenant: Mark 13:31 and Matthew 5:18," in *Eschatology in Bible & Theology: Evangelical Essays at the Dawn of a New Millennium* (ed. K. E. Brower and Mark W. Elliot; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity 1997), 145–69; Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 111–84; and idem, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 78–99.

⁶¹ Meier, *Vision of Matthew*, 229–30. W. D. Davies also advocated this line of interpretation in *Christian Origins and Judaism* (London: Darton, Longmann & Todd, 1962), 31–66.

The apocalyptic events surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection (Matt 27:51–54, 28:2–3) suggest that the turning of the ages has come in his death and resurrection, and the destruction of the temple a mere generation later completes that turning. Further, Jesus' words in 24:34–35 ("Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away") also suggest that the passing of heaven and earth refers to the destruction of the temple, since the phrase "these things" in Matt 24 refers not to the end of the world but to the destruction of the temple (24:1–3).⁶² In the absence of the temple, Jesus' words would endure,⁶³ as well as the accomplishment of his sacrificial death and resurrection. Jesus is thus a replacement for the temple.

Reading this way sheds some light on a prior verse, Matt 12:6. In the context of its co-text in Matt 12:1–8, the superiority of Jesus himself to the temple appears explicit: "Something greater than the temple is here!" (τοῦ ἱεροῦ μείζον ἐστὶν ὧδε). Many commentators, however, contend that the "something greater" does not bear on Jesus' person but on the quality of mercy, based largely on the citation of Hos 6:6 in Matt 12:7. For instance, Luz writes:

Man stellt sich m.E. den matthäischen Gedankengang, wenn man zu schnell über das neutrische μείζον hinwegliest und V 6 christologisch deutet... Das, was größer ist als der Tempel, ist also die Barmherzigkeit, die in Jesu Auslegung des Willens Gottes das Größte geworden ist. In seiner eigenen Zeit bildete wohl für Matthäus die Zerstörung des Tempels einen Hinweis darauf, wie wahr Jesus den Willen Gottes ausgelegt hatte.⁶⁴

It is often noted that Hos 6:6 was important in post-70 Judaism; in a rabbinic exchange that would be roughly contemporaneous with the time most scholars accept for the composition of the Gospel of Matthew, Johanan ben Zakkai is said to have used it to show that prayer, repentance, and good deeds substituted for sacrifice in the absence of the temple:

⁶² Observe also that in both Matt 5:18 and 24:35 the respective form of *παρέρχομαι* is singular (*παρέλθῃ* in Matt 5:18, *παρελεύσεται* in Matt 24:35), even though the phrase *οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ* in each verse would more naturally require a plural. Might this suggest that "heaven and earth" are presented as a singular entity, namely the temple?

⁶³ Fletcher-Louis writes, "It seems now that when the close parallel to Matt 5:18 at 24:35 refers to the passing away of heaven and earth and the endurance of Jesus' words, the first of the three referents in the former text [i.e., 'the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70 confirming the obsolescence of the Old Covenant'] is to the forefront. With the temple cult gone, Jewish Christians should not feel its loss since they still had Jesus' teaching" (Fletcher-Louis, "Destruction of the Temple," 163).

⁶⁴ Luz, *Matthäus*, 2:231.

It happened once that Rabban Johanan b. Zakkai was coming out of Jerusalem, followed by R. Joshua, and he beheld the Temple in ruins. "Woe to us," cried R. Joshua, "for this house that lies in ruins, the place where atonement was made for the sins of Israel!" Rabban Johanan said to him, "My son, be not grieved, for we have another means of atonement which is as effective, and that is, the practice of lovingkindness, as it is stated, For I desire lovingkindness and not sacrifice." (*Abot R. Nat.* 5)⁶⁵

Read in terms of post-70 developments which include the cessation of temple sacrifice, the debate in Matt 12:1–8 is thus thought to concern who is more merciful: Jesus and the disciples on one hand or the Pharisees on the other, reflecting hostility between the post-70 Matthean community and its rabbinic parent body, with each claiming the spirit of Hos 6:6 for itself.

In the narrative world of the Gospel, however, the temple is still standing, and many considerations lead to the conclusion that μεῖζον concerns not the quality of mercy but Jesus' person and thus also his work. In Matt 12:1a Jesus is named as the acting subject: "At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath." Further, the Pharisees accuse Jesus himself directly for his disciples' conduct (12:2). Moreover, as Davies and Allison note, the end of the passage also concerns Jesus' person: "12.8 does help to complete the thought of 12.6. 'Something greater than the temple is here' is explained by 'the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath.'" ⁶⁶ Second, coming immediately on the heels of the typological saying about the sign of Jonah (12:40), the neuter comparative πλεῖον in both Matt 12:41 and 12:42 ("something greater than Jonah is here... something greater than Solomon is here") must concern Jesus himself, not an abstract quality. ⁶⁷ Third, the logic of the passage in Matthew ⁶⁸ is predicated upon seeing Jesus as that which is something greater than the temple and the temple in turn being greater than the Sabbath. The issue is whether his disciples—for which he is responsible—are acting unlawfully in eating grain on the Sabbath (12:2).

⁶⁵ Trans. Eli Cashdan, *The Minor Tractates of the Talmud* (ed. and trans. A. Cohen et al.; 2 vols.; 2d ed.; London: Soncino, 1971), 1:37–38 [= 20a].

⁶⁶ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:314.

⁶⁷ See Gundry, *Matthew*, 223; and Stanton, "Literary Criticism: Ancient and Modern," 82–83; Beale writes, "Jesus 'is greater than Jonah' because he will *actually* die for three days and rise... Jesus is greater than Solomon because he is a greater king and has more wisdom" (*Temple and the Church's Mission*, 178). If Jesus is greater than the temple, than Jonah, and than Solomon, is the Gospel presenting Jesus as the fulfillment of the traditional *triplex munus Christi*, that the Matthean Jesus is prophet, priest and king?

⁶⁸ The Markan version (2:23–28) lacks any reference to Num 28:9–10 (= Matt 12:3–4), the saying that "something greater than the temple is here," and the quotation of Hos 6:6.

Jesus gives two replies in the form of confrontational questions, both of which concern the temple. On one hand, David himself broke the law in eating the shewbread in the “house of God” (12:3–4; later Jewish tradition does place the event on a Sabbath [*b. Menah.* 95b; *Yalqut*, on 1 Sam 21:5]).⁶⁹ On the other hand, Jesus describes as a Sabbath profanation the priests’ required Sabbath sacrifices in the temple as outlined in Num 28:9–10.⁷⁰ Then Jesus informs the Pharisees that “something greater than the temple is here” (12:6). As the ripostes are parallel (οὐκ ἀνέγινωτε in both 12:3 and 12:5) and as each concerns the temple, 12:6 covers both. The import is that Jesus’ disciples can indeed “break” the Sabbath rules not merely because of the principle of mercy or even Jesus’ lordship over the Sabbath as Son of Man but because Jesus himself is the “something greater” than the temple, which, in any instance, permitted the “profanation” of the Sabbath for temple concerns. If the Sabbath is broken for the sake of the temple, how much more for Jesus, who is greater than the temple? Douglas Moo writes,

If the priests who serve in the Temple on the Sabbath are innocent of wrong-doing (according to the rabbinic dictum that the “Temple service takes precedence over the Sabbath” [see *b. Šabb.* 132b]), how much more innocent are the disciples, who are ‘serving’ Jesus, ‘one greater than the Temple’? Both of these allusions to the OT focus attention on the person of Christ, in whose service disobedience to the letter of the Law can sometimes be justified.⁷¹

Thus, in the Matthean version, the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath (12:8) because Jesus—both in person and in function together—is greater than the temple.⁷²

⁶⁹ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:308.

⁷⁰ See also *Jub.* 50:10–11.

⁷¹ Moo, “Jesus and the Authority of the Mosaic Law,” *JSNT* 20 (1984): 3–49. Cited in part with approval by Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:313. McNeile understands the passage in a similar fashion, as if Jesus were saying, “‘if the temple can demand that its servants break the law, much more can I, who am more than the temple’” (*St. Matthew*, 169), as does Adolf von Schlatter: “Wenn er sagen wollte, der den Jüngern zugeteilte Dienst sei mehr als Priesterdienst, so hätte er gesagt: hier ist Größeres als der Priester. Indem er sagt: ‘Größeres als der Tempel’, spricht er nicht von dem, was die Jünger in ihrem Beruf vollbringen, sondern von sich selbst und seinem eigenen Verhältnis zu Gott und zur Gemeinde.... In Jesus ist Gottes Gegenwart in höherer Weise vorhanden als im Tempel” (*Der Evangelist Matthäus: seine Sprache, seine Ziel, seine Selbstständigkeit: ein Kommentar zum ersten Evangelium* [Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1948], 396).

⁷² Daniel Antwi asserts that the function ascribed to Jesus here is atonement: “The neuter (*meizon*) in verse 6 would then refer to the function of Jesus as the one who replaces the function of the temple—that unique institution for atonement” (“Did

At this point we must discuss the import of the quotation of Hos 6:6 in Matt 12:7 in more detail. Taken by itself, it seems at first glance as if the Matthean Jesus is pitting acts of mercy directed towards one's fellow men and women against acts of temple sacrifice directed towards the God of Israel. But, as we have seen in our prior discussion of Hos 11:1 above in chapter 7, pp. 170–71, sometimes when one pays attention to the wider context of those Matthean quotations that through their form, theme and context invite the Model Reader to consider the wider context, interesting effects of meaning are generated that suggest a different, deeper reading is in order.⁷³ For understood in its context, Hos 6:6 does not simply pit mercy against sacrifice; it does not suggest that the heart of true religion consists in love of neighbor instead of ritual. In Hos 6:4 the fickle, fleeting love of Ephraim and Judah is described as “a morning cloud, like the dew that goes away early.” Thus the immediate context concerns failure on the part of God's people. As Hos 6:5 makes clear, the result is judgment: “Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets, I have killed them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light.” Then follows Hos 6:6, which, in turn, is followed by brutal accusations in Hos 6:7–10:

But at Adam they transgressed the covenant;
 there they dealt faithlessly with me.
 Gilead is a city of evildoers,
 tracked with blood.
 As robbers lie in wait for someone,
 so the priests are banded together;
 they murder on the road to Shechem,
 they commit a monstrous crime.
 In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing;
 Ephraim's whoredom is there, Israel is defiled.

Jesus Consider His Death to be an Atoning Sacrifice?” *Int* 45 [1991]: 17–28, 22). See also Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 3:143 n. 66, where they suggest that Jesus is greater than the temple with particular reference to atonement.

⁷³ With many Matthean scholars, I would say that determining the relevance of any background context for biblical quotations in Matthew—whether a formula quotation proper or a biblical quotation from a character in the story such as Jesus (or the devil, for that matter!)—must be done on a case-by-case basis. And even if one would want to find consistency regarding this matter among all ten (fourteen?) of the formula quotations, here we are dealing with a quotation by a character in the story, not the narrator. Matthean intertextuality is much richer than the formula quotations, rich and fascinating as they are.

Similar accusations against Judah follow: “For you also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed” (Hos 6:11 and Hos 7).

Hosea’s point, then, does not concern a generic, blanket rejection of sacrifice but rather the idea that in the absence of righteousness the ritual of sacrifice will avail nothing—a fundamental position which the Matthean Jesus himself holds (cf., for instance, Matt 5:23–34). The Matthean Jesus also mentions “all the righteous blood shed on earth” and, in particular, the murder of Zechariah “whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar” (Matt 23:35). In light of this and in light of what was discussed above regarding grievous sins, the temple and the divine presence, might not the Matthean Jesus be suggesting to the Pharisees that they are risking another murder of another righteous man (Jesus being the paradigm of righteousness in the Gospel) and thus risking divine retribution? Might not the Matthean Jesus be suggesting that if they realized the true nature of his person and mission and thus the gravity of the situation “[they] would not have condemned the guiltless” (Matt 12:7)? Indeed, a mere seven verses later they will conspire to murder him (Matt 12:14).

The full import of the Matthean passage is not fully grasped by many interpreters, however. Stanton writes, “There is no anti-Temple polemic here. Matthew uses the comparison to make a striking Christological claim: Jesus is greater than the Temple.”⁷⁴ Gundry agrees: “Here Matthew uses the rabbinic kind of argument called ‘the light and the heavy,’ i.e., an argument *a fortiori*... There is a reflection against the Temple no more than there is a reflection against Jonah and Solomon in vv 41–42. An argument from the less to the greater requires acceptance of the less.”⁷⁵ On their face, such sentiments may appear accurate. The decisive religious and political importance and centrality of the temple, the very dwelling of God, however, should lead the Model Reader to suspect opposition and competition. The temple can brook no rivals. Were that not sufficient, one must remember the Matthean Jesus’ attitude to the temple in other loci in the Gospel. Neither should one forget the Matthean Jesus’ radical claim to forgive sins apart from the sacrifices of the temple (Matt 9:1–8),⁷⁶ something generally reserved to the temple system in the first century (cf., for instance, Heb 9:22).

⁷⁴ Stanton, “Literary Criticism,” 83.

⁷⁵ Gundry, *Matthew*, 224.

⁷⁶ See Beale, *Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 177–78.

In a similar manner, many scholars contend that Jesus' prophetic action in the temple (i.e., the so-called "cleansing," Matt 21:12–17) is not an indictment of the temple *per se* but of corruption within it: "The disfavour is not directed against the Temple as such, but against those who have corrupted the institution, who have prevented the Temple from being what God intended it to be, a house of prayer."⁷⁷ Similarly, it is often noted that the Gospel suggests that the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem is the result of the Jewish rejection of Jesus (cf. 21:13, 42–43; 22:7; 23:35; 24:2). The split between the temple as institution and edifice on the one hand and those who corrupt it and bring about its destruction on the other, however, need not be made so sharply, and there are indications in the temple incident that suggest that the Matthean Jesus intends not to cleanse the temple but to replace it.

The chief function of the temple was ritual sacrifice, particularly the twice-daily Tamid, which likely had atoning significance. Sacrifices and offerings were accompanied by and equated with prayer (cf. Ps 141:2, Acts 3:1, Rev 5:8),⁷⁸ and Isa 56:7, which Jesus cites in Matt 21:13, connects prayer and sacrifice: "I will lead them into my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their holocausts and their sacrifices will be acceptable on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."⁷⁹ Thus, if this limited context of the citation is in view, Jesus does not eschew outer cultic sacrifice in favor of the inner piety of prayer when citing Isa 56:7 but focuses squarely on the temple's chief function: sacrifice. Likewise, the citation of Jer 7:11 need not be limited to financial misdealing or imply brigandage in particular. Jer 7:1–14 refers to oppression, the shedding of innocent blood, idolatry, stealing, murder, adultery, and swearing falsely, and suggests that it is asinine to think one can act in such ways and then retreat to the safety of the temple, like highwaymen hiding from the law in the safety of a wilderness cave: "Will you . . . then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are delivered!'—only to go on doing all these abominations? Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?" (7:9a, 10–11a). Therefore, as Davies and Allison write, "'robbers' cave' is here, as in Jeremiah, not necessarily to be taken literally: it is just a way of saying that the temple harbours people who, from

⁷⁷ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 3:134.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 3:139.

⁷⁹ My translation of the LXX.

Jesus' point of view, are criminals."⁸⁰ In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus' words do not set sacrifice and the associated financial dealings against prayer. Rather, Jesus affirms the fundamental sacrificial function of the temple and condemns those who would take refuge in the temple in spite of their misdeeds.

The chief misdeed will be the rejection of Jesus and the result thereof the destruction of the temple, which will eliminate the possibility of sacrifice. One might therefore see Jesus' actions in Matt 21:12—driving out those who were buying and selling and overturning the tables of the money changers and the seats of those selling doves—as the symbol of the end of the temple-based sacrificial system, for all that Jesus disrupts was in fact necessary for sacrifice in the temple.⁸¹ Doves would have been the chief sacrificial animal for the masses, used for both burnt offerings and sin offerings (Lev 15:14–15, 29–30) and a substitute offering for those too poor to afford a quadruped (5:7; 12:8; 14:21–23).⁸² Jesus had already declared himself and Peter theoretically exempt from the temple tax (Matt 17:24–27; although Jesus has Peter pay it as a practical matter, “so as not to give offense”), which the money changers of 21:12 would have collected for the support of the sacrificial system. Furthermore, as noted above, the temple tax was considered as providing “ransom” (λύτρω), a term which Jesus applies to his own mission in Matt 20:28 (λύτρω). In light of this and Jesus' Passover Eucharist, the Matthean Jesus' action in the temple seems to be a prophetic action portending the end of the temple-based sacrificial system to be replaced by himself as a sacrifice. Forgiveness will no longer be mediated by the temple system but by Jesus through his Church.⁸³ Neusner asserts that Jesus' action

will have called into question the very simple fact that the daily whole offering effected atonement and brought about expiation for sin, and God had so instructed Moses in the Torah...the overturning of the moneychanger's tables represents an act of the rejection of the most important rite of the Israelite cult, the daily whole-offering, and, therefore, a statement that there is a means of atonement other than the daily whole offering, which now is null. Then what was to take the place of

⁸⁰ Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 3:140.

⁸¹ See Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 63–69.

⁸² Sanders considers it an “undoubted fact that most sacrifices were birds, not quadrupeds” (ibid., 91).

⁸³ See Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 179; and Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 413–27.

the daily whole-offering? It was to be the rite of the Eucharist: table for table, whole-offering for whole-offering.⁸⁴

What, then, of the Akedah? Since the Akedah was the patriarchal grounding of the temple and its sacrifices, particularly the “whole-offering,” the presentation of Jesus as a new Isaac in the Gospel of Matthew functions in service of the Matthean theme of Jesus as the replacement for the temple. The temple’s legitimacy is predicated on the Akedah; the Matthean Jesus’ legitimacy is predicated on the claim that he is the beloved Son like Isaac, a divinely ordained sacrifice for the redemption of his people. That Jesus is to replace the temple more or less requires that Jesus be presented as a new Isaac.

⁸⁴ Jacob Neusner, “Money-Changers in the Temple: The Mishnah’s Explanation,” *NTS* 35 (1989): 289–90. See also idem, “How Judaism and Christianity can Talk to Each Other: The Basis for an Interreligious Dialogue,” *BR* 6 (1990): 32–38, 40–41, 45.

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INDEX OF TEXTS

OLD TESTAMENT/SCRIPTURES OF ISRAEL

<i>Genesis</i>		22:2	77, 80, 82–83,
2:4	139		153, 212–13,
2:24	81–82		266
3:1	81–82	22:3	251, 252
3:7	81–82	22:4	78, 79
4:19	81–82	22:5	4, 19, 78, 80,
5:1	139		251, 255, 256
6:19–20	81	22:6–8	81
7:2–3	81	22:6	78, 251, 252
12:1–3	77	22:7–8	110
12:1	77	22:7	82, 251, 252
12:3	77, 78	22:8	78, 79
12:6	77	22:9	251, 252
15	77, 107	22:10	251, 252, 258
15:2–6	92	22:11–19	84
15:5	78, 107	22:11	153, 227
15:6	145, 150	22:11–12	154, 266, 79
16:11	149, 150	22:11, 15	153–54
17:16	101	22:12	78, 153, 251,
17:19	1, 66, 99,		252, 256–57
	144–45,	22:13	79, 110
	149–51	22:14	79
18:10	148	22:15–18	77, 79, 84
18:14	148	22:15–16	154, 266
18:19	145, 150	22:15	227
19:37	149	22:16	78
19:38	149	22:17	77, 78, 90, 107
21:3	149	22:18	77, 78, 111
21:6	101	22:19	78
21:27	81	24:27	145, 150
21:31	81	26–27	94
21:33	78	26:18	101
22	1, 2, 10–12,	28:3–4	93
	14–16, 77–82,	28:13–15	93
	161–62, 170,	28:13	99, 101
	173, 205, 209,	28:19	93
	210, 222, 259	29:31	151
22 (MT)	77–79	29:32–35	149, 151
22 (LXX)	79–82	29:32	150
22:1–10	84	30:20–21	149
22:1	77, 94, 251	30:22–24	151
22:2, 11–12, 15–16	161, 266	31:3	93
22:2, 12, 16	2, 10, 79,	31:11–13	93
	153–54, 221	31:36–42	93
22:2 (Ethiopic)	213	32:27–28	93

33:4	81	13:16	183
37:2	80	25:13	197
37:30	80	28	110
38:3–5	149	28:9–10	285, 286
40:5	81	28:17	85
41:11	81	35:30–34	275
		35:30	281
<i>Exodus</i>			
4:22–23	161, 170	<i>Deuteronomy</i>	
4:24–26	84	5	175
10:6	80	5:10	80
13:21–22	211, 215	6–8	175
14:31	13, 219	6	201
19:16	211, 215	6:7–8	45
24:1	211, 212	6:13	175, 178
24:8	206, 243, 244	6:16	175, 178
24:9	211, 212	6:18–19	181
24:12	212	7	176
24:15–18	211, 212, 215	7:9	80
24:16	211, 212	8	201
24:17	275	8:2	175
29:41–46	275	8:3	175, 177
30:13	278	10:12	80
30:15	278	11:1	80
30:16	278	11:22	80
33:7–11	211, 215, 231	17:6–7	281
34:3	212	18:15	210, 211, 215–16, 228
34:5	211, 215		
34:29–35	211	19:9	80
34:29–30	211	30:16	80
34:29	213	32:39	118, 274
34:30	218	34:6	234
40:34–38	211, 215, 231	<i>Joshua</i>	
40:35	211, 215, 232, 233	5:2	183
<i>Leviticus</i>		5:13–15	184
1:5	274	6:2	184
1:6	274	22:5	80
4–16	245	23:11	80
4–6	110		
8–9	110	<i>Judges</i>	
9:22–24	275	11:34	221
11:44–45	274	11:36	112
15:4–15	290	13:19–21	275
15:29–30	290	40:2	112
16	110	40:3	112
19:2	274		
20:3	274	<i>1 Samuel</i>	
20:26	274	2:6	274
23:6	85		
<i>Numbers</i>		<i>2 Samuel</i>	
9:15–23	211, 215, 231	7	282
12:7–8	13, 219	22:20	167
		24:15–17	79

<i>1 Kings</i>		30:29	79
3:3	80	32:15	245
17:8–24	235	34:1–7	274
18:38	275	37:35	192
19:8–19	211	40:3	171
		40:11	274
<i>2 Kings</i>		41:8–9	192
2:1–12	234	42:1–4	13, 19, 168, 191, 201–04, 207, 219, 227, 235, 267
25:2–4	104–05		2, 3, 156–61, 163–64, 168, 172, 193, 210, 219, 227, 235, 266
<i>1 Chronicles</i>		42:1	
21:26	275		
<i>2 Chronicles</i>			
3:1	82–83, 125	44:1–2	192
33:15	79	44:2	164
		44:21	192
<i>Nehemiah</i>		45:4	192
1:5	80	48:20	192
		49:1–6	192
<i>Psalms</i>		49:3	192, 193
2	13	49:5	193
2:7	156–63, 172, 179, 180, 181, 210, 219, 220, 266	49:6	193
	240	52:13–53:12	194
22:7–9	178	52:13	193, 194
22:9	274	53	198–201, 205–06, 220, 245
23:1–2	79	53:4	19, 194, 198, 204, 205
24:3	259	53:8	196
41 (40 LXX):10	79	53:9–10	195
48:5	177–78	53:10	194, 205, 245
90:11–12 (LXX)	178	53:10–11	196
90:11 (LXX)	274	53:11	193–94, 205
95:7	113	53:11–12	204, 205
116:15	183	53:12	196, 244–45, 259
129:8 (LXX)	289	56:7	289
141:2		57:6	245
		59:7	245
<i>Proverbs</i>		63:1–6	274
6:20–22	45	63:11	192
<i>Isaiah</i>		<i>Jeremiah</i>	
2:2–3	79	2:19	167
3:17	245	6:26	221
4:5	232–33	7:1–14	289
6:1	79	7:9	289
7:14	145, 149–51	7:10–11	289
9:1–2	201, 203	7:11	289
9:5	149	11:20	274
19:7	245	14:10	167
20:3	192	14:12	167
22:6	245	17:10	274
22:20	192	18:8	85

20:12	274	6:11	288
31 (LXX 38):31–34	244	7	288
36:3	85	11	175
39:2	104	11:1–2	201
52:6	104	11:1	170
		11:2	171
<i>Ezekiel</i>			
3:18	252	<i>Amos</i>	
34:15–16	274	8:10	221
<i>Daniel</i>		<i>Micah</i>	
9:4	80	4:1–2	79
12:3	214		
<i>Hosea</i>		<i>Zechariah</i>	
6:4	287	6:9–15	282
6:5	287	8:3	79
6:6	19, 202, 284–88	9:11	244
6:7–10	287	12:10	221
		13:7	259

DEUTEROCANONICAL TEXTS

<i>Baruch</i>		4:23–24	119
51:3	214	5:4	116
		5:6	120
<i>2 Esdras/4 Ezra</i>		5:32	116
General	104–05	6:12–15	120
6:25–26	234	6:27–29	119, 120
7:28–29	191	6:28–29	121
7:97	214	6:28	119
		6:29	116
<i>Judith</i>		7:13–14	117
General	93–94	7:18–19	118
8:24–27	93–94, 256	7:19	117
8:26	93	13	117
		13:1	117
<i>1 Maccabees</i>		13:7	117
1	105	13:8–12	117
		13:12	17
<i>2 Maccabees</i>		13:17	119
2:8	233	16:18–20	118
3:5	115	16:20	17
6:18	116	16:24	118
		16:25	117, 119
<i>4 Maccabees</i>		17:20–22	120
General	115–22	17:21–22	121
1:1–2	121	17:21	116, 119
1:1	117	17:23	121
1:11	121	18:4	121
1:13	117	18:5	119, 121
1:15–17	117	18:6	118
4:2	115	18:10–11	118
4:21	121	18:14–19	118

<i>Sirach</i>		<i>Tobit</i>	
11:12–13	191	6:3	80
45:1	222		
46:1	183	<i>Wisdom</i>	
		2:12–13	191

OTHER JEWISH AND ANE TEXTS

<i>Josephus</i>		<i>Abr.</i> 175	103
		<i>Abr.</i> 176	103
General	123–26	<i>Abr.</i> 196	103
<i>Ant.</i> 1.222–236	123–26	<i>Abr.</i> 198	103
<i>Ant.</i> 1.222	123		
<i>Ant.</i> 1.223	123	<i>Congr.</i> 34–38	100
<i>Ant.</i> 1.224	83, 125	<i>Congr.</i> 175	101
<i>Ant.</i> 1.225	123		
<i>Ant.</i> 1.226	83, 125	<i>Det.</i> 46	100
<i>Ant.</i> 1.227	123	<i>Det.</i> 60	100
<i>Ant.</i> 1.228–31	123	<i>Det.</i> 124	101
<i>Ant.</i> 1.229	123		
<i>Ant.</i> 1.230–31	123	<i>Her.</i> 186	279
<i>Ant.</i> 1.231	123		
<i>Ant.</i> 1.232	124, 126	<i>Ios.</i> 1	97–88
<i>Ant.</i> 1.233–34	125		
<i>Ant.</i> 1.233	125	<i>Leg.</i> 3.85–87	99
<i>Ant.</i> 1.234	125	<i>Leg.</i> 3.219	101
<i>Ant.</i> 1.235	125		
<i>Ant.</i> 1.236	125	<i>Legat.</i> 156	279
<i>Ant.</i> 3.202–03	276		
<i>Ant.</i> 5.438	80	<i>Mut.</i> 12	100
<i>Ant.</i> 11.22	115	<i>Mut.</i> 88	100
<i>Ant.</i> 18.312–13	279	<i>Mut.</i> 121	183
<i>Ant.</i> 20.166	276	<i>Mut.</i> 131	101
<i>J.W.</i> 2.455–56	276	<i>QG</i> 4.194	100
<i>J.W.</i> 4.150	276		
<i>J.W.</i> 4.151	276	<i>Sacr.</i> 110	103
<i>J.W.</i> 4.313	276		
<i>J.W.</i> 5.412	276	<i>Sobr.</i> 8	100
<i>J.W.</i> 6.300	276		
		<i>Somn.</i> 1.160–61	98
<i>Other ANE Texts</i>		<i>Somn.</i> 1.166–69	99
		<i>Somn.</i> 1.171–72	99
<i>Epic of Gilgamesh</i>		<i>Somn.</i> 1.173	101
155–61	275	<i>Somn.</i> 1.194	99
<i>Philo</i>		<i>Spec.</i> 1.78	279
General	97–104	<i>Pseudepigrapha</i>	
<i>Abr.</i> 102–104	102		
<i>Abr.</i> 167	102	<i>1 Enoch</i>	
<i>Abr.</i> 168	102	31:2	232
<i>Abr.</i> 171	102	39:4–8	232
<i>Abr.</i> 172	102–03	39:6	191

40:5	191	48:15	86, 91, 92
47:1-4	191	48:16	86
48:4	191	48:18	86
71:16	232	49:2-4	87
		49:2	85
2 <i>Enoch</i>		49:7	87
61:23	232	49:8	87
		49:9	87
<i>Joseph and Aseneth</i>		49:12	85
27:2	80	49:22	85
		49:23	91
		50:11	286
<i>Jubilees</i>			
General	83-88	<i>Liber antiquitatum biblicarum</i>	
1:11	84	General	104-115
1:20	91	9:5	111
5:13-16	85	11:8	104
5:17-18	85	12:9	104
6:14	279	18:1-7	106-07
10:1-6	86	18:3	106
10:1-2	86	18:4	106
10:7-9	86	18:5-6	106
10:7-8	86	18:5	106-08, 114
10:11	86	18:7	107
11:1-6	86	18:13-14	111
11:10-11	86	19:4	104
12:20	86	19:7	104-05
13:16	144	22:5-6	104
15:8	85	25:9-13	111
15:33-34	85	30:7	108-09, 114
15:33	91	31-32	109
17:15	84, 87, 144	31:1	109
17:16	84, 85	31:2	109
17:17-18	84, 87	32:1-4	107-12
18:2	213	32:1	107, 109, 111
18:3	84	32:2	107, 112
18:9	85	32:3	106-08,
18:12	84, 85		110-12, 114,
18:13	83, 84		124
18:14-16	88		106, 108-09,
18:16	84, 88	32:4	112-13
18:18-19	84-85		109
19:1	144	32:7	110
19:26-29	86	32:9-10	109
19:28	86	32:11	109
30:7-17	85	32:12-13	108-09, 114
30:22	86	32:12	109
35:17	86	32:13	110
48:1-4	86	32:14	109-10, 114
48:2-4	84	32:15	109
48:2	85	32:16	109
48:5	91	32:17	109-10
48:8-9	91	33:4-5	114
48:9	85, 86	33:4	108
48:12	86	33:5	108-09
48:13	85	34	111

35:3	108	2.ii.10	90
36:3	111	2.ii.11–12	91
38	111	2.ii.13	91
39:7	113	2.ii.13–14	92
39:11	112–13		
40	114	4Q226	
40:1–3	112–14	General	88
40:1	112		
40:2	106, 113	4Q227	
40:3	113	General	88
40:4	113		
40:5	113	<i>War Scroll (M)</i>	
44	111	13.4	91
		13.10–11	91
		14.9	91
<i>Psalms of Solomon</i>			
General	191–92		
2:18	240	<i>Rabbinic Texts</i>	
17:28	191		
17:31	191	'Abot R. Nat.	
17:35	191	5	285
<i>Sibylline Oracles</i>		<i>m. Ber.</i>	
5:422	282	9:5	175
<i>Testament of Abraham</i>		<i>Lev. Rab.</i>	
See "Other Christian Texts"		2:11	248
<i>Testament of Levi</i>		<i>Mekh. de R. Ishmael</i>	
See "Other Christian Texts"		Pisha 7:78–79	248
<i>Qumran</i>		<i>b. Menah.</i>	
		95b	286
<i>Damascus Document (CD)</i>			
4.5	91	<i>Midr. Ps.</i>	
5.18–19	91	43:3	191
<i>1QIsa^a</i>		<i>m. Pes.</i>	
General	191	10.1	242
		10.5	242
4Q225 ("Pseudo-Jubilees")			
General	88–93	<i>Pirke d. Rabbi Eliezer</i>	
Frag. 1	91	31	124
Frag. 2	91		
1.5	91	<i>b. Šabb.</i>	
1.6	91	132b	286
1.8	91		
1.10	91	<i>Sipre</i>	
1.14	91	Deut 6:5	175
2.i.3–8	92		
2.i.8–9	92	<i>m. Ta'an.</i>	
2.i.9–12	92	4.6	105
2.i.12	213		
2.ii.4	89	<i>Yalqut</i>	
2.ii.6–8	90	1 Sam 21:5	286
2.ii.8–10	92		

Targumim

<i>Frg. Tg. Gen 22:10</i>	89	<i>Tg. Isa. 53:10</i>	196
<i>Tg. Isa. 42:1-4</i>	191	<i>Tg. Isa. 53:11</i>	197
<i>Tg. Isa. 42:1</i>	196	<i>Tg. Isa. 53:12</i>	197
<i>Tg. Isa. 43:10</i>	196	<i>Tg. Neof. Gen 12:42</i>	248-49
<i>Tg. Isa. 52:3</i>	197	<i>Tg. Neof. Gen 22:7</i>	168
<i>Tg. Isa. 52:7</i>	197	<i>Tg. Ps. 2:10</i>	221
<i>Tg. Isa. 52:13-15</i>	197	<i>Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 22:9</i>	89
<i>Tg. Isa. 52:13</i>	196	<i>Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 22:10</i>	89
<i>Tg. Isa. 53:4-5</i>	196-97	<i>Tg. Ps.-J. Exod 24:8</i>	244
<i>Tg. Isa. 53:5</i>	282	<i>Tg. Zech. 6:12-13</i>	282
		<i>Tg. Zech. 9:11</i>	244

NEW TESTAMENT

<i>Matthew</i>		2:22	203, 253, 255
1:1-4:16	139	3-4	207
1-2	173-74	3:1-4:11	182
1:1	3, 138-43, 167-68, 179, 207, 248, 266	3	169
1:2-17	143-44, 207, 266	3:1-12	171
1:16	179	3:2	171
1:17	179	3:3	171
1:18-25	66, 138, 144-51, 207, 278	3:5-6	171
1:18	139, 179	3:7-12	169, 173
1:19	145, 150	3:7-10	167
1:20-21	1, 3, 144-45, 150-51, 253, 266	3:7-8	171, 174
1:20	253	3:7	170
1:21	149, 180, 182-83, 244, 269, 270, 273	3:9	171, 174
1:22-23	145, 150-51	3:10-12	171
1:23	179, 183, 215, 233, 274, 277, 280	3:11	181
1:24	253	3:13-4:11	170, 179
2-4	167, 266	3:13-17	173
2:1-4:16	169	3:13	171, 174
2	169, 170	3:14	171
2:4	179	3:15	171, 172, 173, 214
2:12	170, 203, 253, 255	3:16	174, 277
2:13	255	3:17	2, 13, 68-69, 79, 153-87, 170, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 179, 180, 181, 204, 207, 219, 221, 223, 240, 255
2:14	203, 255		203
2:15	170, 175	4	203
2:19-21	170, 201	4:1-16	167, 169, 175, 180, 201, 203, 253
2:19	253	4:1-11	253
		4:1-10	170
		4:1	174, 175, 253
		4:2	176-77

4:3	170, 174, 177	9:24	203-04, 255
4:4	175, 177	9:27-31	282
4:6-7	258	9:32-38	253
4:6	174, 177, 253	9:34	202
4:7	175	10:1	176
4:8-10	176, 178	10:5-6	201
4:8	212, 223-24	11:2-16:20	202
4:10-11	170	11:6	202
4:10	175, 178, 179, 224	11:13	234, 259
4:11	174, 253, 258	11:20-24	202
4:12-16	169, 227, 235	11:25-30	180
4:12	181, 203, 255	11:27	179
4:15-16	201, 203	12	182, 202, 203, 207
4:17-16:20	201	12:1-8	271, 284-88
4:17-11:1	202	12:1	285
4:17	136-38	12:2	202, 285
4:18-22	137	12:3-4	286
5:7	290	12:3	286
5:10-12	202	12:4	281
5:15	234	12:5	286
5:17-20	215, 234, 283	12:6	284, 285, 286
5:17	19, 259	12:7	19, 202, 284, 288
5:18-20	171, 253	12:8	285, 286, 290
5:18	283, 284	12:9-21	203
5:20	202	12:9-10	202
5:23-34	288	12:14	170, 172, 181, 202, 203, 207, 228, 257, 267, 288
5:33-37	126		255
5:38-48	257	12:15	13, 19, 198, 201-204, 235, 267
5:38-42	250	12:17-21	157, 168, 204, 227, 228, 235
6:1-18	202	12:18-21	2, 3, 13, 158, 159, 161, 163-64, 206-08, 255
6:13	170		253
6:41	253	12:22-30	182
7:12	234, 259	12:22-29	253
7:15-23	171, 253	12:22	203
7:22-27	253	12:26	171, 253
7:29	176, 202	12:33-37	171
8-9	176, 253	12:33	170, 171, 203, 254, 257
8:1-9:34	199	12:34	203
8:1-17	199		283, 285
8:2-4	282	12:39	285, 285
8:5-13	176, 201	12:40	203
8:10	201	12:41	203
8:16	239	12:45	171, 253
8:17	13, 19, 198-201, 199-200	12:46-50	
8:28-34	253		
9	202		
9:1-8	176, 202, 288		
9:3	202		
9:11	202		
9:13	19, 202, 203, 270		
9:14	202		

13:30	225	17:4	217, 224, 225, 230
13:38–39	170	17:5–6	221
13:38	225	17:5	2, 4, 79, 211,
13:39	253		215–22, 217, 221,
13:40–43	225		222, 223, 224, 225,
13:41	225, 253		226, 227, 228, 230,
13:43	213, 225, 229,		240, 255, 258
	230, 231	17:6	211, 225, 225, 226
13:49	253	17:7	214, 224, 225, 226,
14:13–33	239		230
14:13	203, 255	17:8	233
14:15	241	17:9–13	210, 224, 230
14:21–23	290	17:9	207, 209, 210, 224,
14:23	241		225, 235
15:21–28	201	17:12	180, 210, 220, 224,
15:21	203, 255		235, 257, 258
16:4	203	17:13	207, 209, 225
16:13–17:13	228	17:19	217
16:13–28	207, 210, 224,	17:22–23	180, 257
	229, 235	17:24–27	290
16:13	224	18:15–22	277
16:15	229	18:16	281
16:16–19	224	18:20	277, 280
16:16	224	19:15	281
16:18	277	20:13	256
16:20	229	20:17–19	178, 180, 257
16:21–28	228	20:28	196, 204, 205, 257,
16:21–23	179, 210, 229, 230,		270, 272, 274, 290
	224, 217	21:2	255
16:21	136–38, 173, 180,	21:4	251
	181, 207, 209, 224,	21:12–17	289
	225, 229, 235, 257,	21:12–16	281
	258, 259, 266, 272	21:12	290
16:22–23	137, 224	21:13	281, 289
16:22	229	21:19	171
16:23	209, 224, 229	21:23–37	176
16:24	224, 231	21:25	171
16:27–28	224	21:28–32	171, 253
16:27	225, 253	21:32	172
16:28	214, 224, 225, 230,	21:34	171
	231	21:42–43	289
17	222	21:43	171, 201, 204, 235,
17:1–13	220, 229, 235		253
17:1–8	210, 218, 280	22:7	289
17:1–2	226, 230	22:12	256
17:1	80, 211, 212, 224,	22:30	253
	225, 226, 231	22:36	259
17:2–6	226	22:40	234, 259
17:2	211, 213, 214, 224,	22:46–23:1	170
	225, 226, 229, 230,	23:7–8	256
	231, 233, 234	23:21	277, 278
17:3	211, 214, 225, 226,	23:27–28	172
	226, 230	23:28	171, 172
17:4–5	229	23:29–35	172–73

23:33	171	26:44	255
23:35	245, 288, 289	26:45	259
23:38	281	26:46	225, 255
24-25	253	26:47-56	252, 256-61
24	284	26:47	225, 251, 252, 256
24:1-3	284	26:48	256
24:1-2	281	26:49	256
24:2	289	26:50	251, 252, 256
24:30	176	26:51	251, 252, 258
24:31	253	26:52-53	256
24:34-35	284	26:52	250, 252, 258
24:35	284	26:53	178, 253, 258, 282
24:36	253	26:54	259
24:64	176	26:55	251, 252, 259
25:1-30	171, 253	26:56	19, 259
25:31-46	171, 253	26:57-63	281
25:31	253	26:59	281
25:41	253	26:60	281, 282
25:46	273	26:61	258, 281, 282, 283
25:54	225	26:63	126, 282, 283
26:1-35	2	26:64	6, 239
26:1-5	137, 238, 243,	27:5	203, 255
	257	27:11	126
26:1-2	180, 257	27:19	214, 253
26:1	238	27:20	170, 202
26:2	238, 240	27:24	239
26:3-5	170, 172, 238	27:25	277
26:3-4	257	27:27-31	226
26:16-20	176	27:27	225
26:16	136-37	27:28	226
26:17	241, 242, 246	27:29	226
26:17-19	242	27:35	226
26:18	242	27:38-43	240
26:19	241, 246	27:38	226, 259
26:20	241	27:39	226
26:24	254, 257	27:40	177, 225, 239,
26:25	243, 256		282
26:26-28	244	27:43	178, 225, 240
26:26	243, 244	27:44	259
26:28	173, 180,	27:45-50	226
	205-06, 207,	27:45	225, 226
	243, 244, 257,	27:46	226
	269, 270, 273	27:51-54	284
26:30	225	27:51-52	253
26:31-35	256	27:51	277, 280
26:36-56	2, 250-61	27:54	221, 225
26:36-46	225, 250-56	27:55-56	225
26:36	4, 19, 251,	27:63-64	283
	255	28	277
26:37	225	28:2-3	284
26:39	225, 254, 255	28:2	253
26:40	225	28:3	214, 226, 230
26:41	251, 256	28:5	230
26:42	225, 255	28:10	230

28:16–20	138, 178, 226, 227, 235	1:36 8:56	247 68, 155
28:16	226	14:2	232
28:17	226		
28:18–20	138, 226	<i>Acts</i>	
28:18	226	3:1	289
28:19–20	201, 204	3:13	196
28:19	179	15:34	251
28:20	138, 171, 215, 233, 253, 277, 280	18:6 18:19 28:23–28	201 251 201
<i>Mark</i>		<i>Romans</i>	
1:11	156, 158, 159, 160–61, 164, 168, 227	5:15 5:19 8:28–39	196 196 186
2:23–28	285	8:32	68, 186
6:33	251	9–11	201
9:4	214	11:1	277
9:6	218, 232		
9:7	230	<i>1 Corinthians</i>	
9:12	220	1:18–25	143
10:45	196, 204	15:21–22	69
13:32–37	254	15:45	69
14:11	136		
14:14	243	<i>Galatians</i>	
14:24	196, 205	3:13–14	186
14:32	251	4:4	148
14:34	254		
14:35	254	<i>Philippians</i>	
14:37–38	254	2:7	196
14:40–41	254		
14:46	251	<i>Hebrews</i>	
14:47	251	9:19–22	244
14:62	6	9:22	288
<i>Luke</i>		<i>1 Peter</i>	
1	149	1:19	247
1:13	149		
1:31	149	<i>1 John</i>	
1:34	146–47	3:5	196
2:10	148		
3:22	156, 161, 227	<i>Jude</i>	
9:27	251	5	183
9:31	216		
9:32–33	232	<i>Revelation</i>	
9:34	230, 218	1:16	214
9:35	158, 216	5:6	247
22:11	243	5:8	289
		5:9	247
<i>John</i>		5:12	247
1:29	247	12:11	247
1:34	158–59		

OTHER CHRISTIAN TEXTS

AMBROSE		EPHREM GRAECUS	
<i>Isaac</i> 1.1	146	<i>Sermo in Abraham et Isaac</i>	
		7–9	147
AQUINAS		10–14	147–48
<i>Comm. on St. John</i>	68	EUSEBIUS	
<i>Lauda Zion</i>	68	<i>Praep. Ev.</i>	
AUGUSTINE		9.19.4	76
<i>Civ.</i> 16.32	68	9.20.1	76
<i>Doctr. Chr.</i> 2–3	34	GREGORY OF NYSSA	
<i>Barnabas</i>		<i>Deit.</i>	70
7:3	67, 126	IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH	
CHRYSOSTOM		<i>Eph.</i> 21.1	116
<i>Hom. Gen.</i>		<i>Pol.</i> 2.3	116
47.10	70	<i>Pol.</i> 6.1	116
47.14	68–69, 155	<i>Rom.</i> 5.3	116
49.6–7	146	<i>Smyrn.</i> 10.2	116
49.10–11	147	IRENAEUS	
<i>Hom. Heb.</i>		<i>Adv. Haer.</i>	
27.6	184	4.5.4	68, 185–86
<i>Hom. Matt.</i>		5.22.1	182
2.3	139	JEROME	
56.1	234	<i>Comm. Matt.</i> 1:1	139
56.5	228	<i>Jov.</i> 1.21	183
<i>Pecc.</i>		JUSTIN MARTYR	
6–8	146	<i>Dial.</i>	
CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA		61	184
<i>Paed.</i> 1.5.23	67	62	184
CLEMENT OF ROME		72	247
<i>1 Clem.</i>		88	162–63
5:1–7	126	90–91	184
10:7	126	103	162–63
31:1	126	111	184
31:2–4	94	131	184
31:3	124, 126	LACTANTIUS	
42	126	<i>Epit.</i> 4.17	183–84
44	126	<i>Martyrdom of Polycarp</i>	
55:4–5	94	14	161
CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA		14.1–3	165
<i>Paschal Homily</i> 5	67, 259	MELITO OF SARDIS	
<i>Diognetus</i>		Fragment 9	69–70
8.9–11	161, 165–66	<i>Opus Imperfectum in Matthaem</i>	
		1:5	148–49

ORIGEN		TERTULLIAN	
<i>Hom. Josh.</i>		<i>Bapt. 20</i>	176
6.2	184		
11.6	184	<i>Testament of Abraham</i>	
12.3	184	4:1	76
13.2–4	184	4:7	76
15.5	184	20:14	232
15.7	184		
PSEUDO-GREGORY OF NYSSA		<i>Testament of Levi</i>	
<i>In Abrahamo</i>	69	18:6–7	76, 155
		18:12	91

CLASSICAL TEXTS

ARISTOTLE		PORPHYRY	
<i>Cat.</i>	25	<i>Isag.</i>	25
<i>Top. 1.15.106aff</i>	26		
DEMETRIUS		SUETONIUS	
<i>Style 287–88</i>	260	<i>Vesp. 8.4</i>	116
EURIPIDES		TACITUS	
<i>Herc. Fur. 972–74</i>	118	<i>Annals</i>	
<i>Ion. 1280–81</i>	118	2.58	115
		13.8	115, 116
		14.26	115
LONGINUS			
<i>On the Sublime 16</i>	260		

INDEX OF MODERN AUTHORS

- Ådna, J. 278
 Aichele, G. and G. Phillips 44, 45, 52
 Alkier, S. 24–25, 43, 71, 175, 223
 Allais, A. 36–38
 Allen, G. 46, 48, 50
 Allison, D. 3, 5, 8, 131, 138, 139, 140, 211, 225
 with W. D. Davies 3–6, 12–14, 134, 139, 143–44, 149, 150, 156, 159–66, 170, 172, 176, 183, 184, 186, 187, 189, 198, 200, 204–05, 210, 211–12, 213, 215, 216, 218, 219, 220, 222, 224, 225, 228–29, 231, 232–33, 241, 243, 244–45, 246, 249, 250, 254, 255, 269, 282, 285, 287, 289–90
 Antwi, D. 286
 Atherton, J. 56

 Baer, D. 195–96
 Bar-Ilan, M. 9
 Barthes, R. 21, 45, 49–50, 52, 54
 Bauckham, R. 221
 Bauer, D. 136, 138
 Baxter, W. 140
 Beale, G. 182, 285, 288
 Beare, F. 156, 157
 Beaton, R. 135, 191
 Ben-Porat, Z. 58
 Best, E. 156
 Bickerman, E. 115–16
 Blenkinsopp, J. 192
 Bondanella, P. 22, 40, 54
 Boobyer, G. 215, 234
 Borg, M. 278
 Boyarin, D. 74
 Braun, F. 155
 Breitenstein, U. 116
 Bretscher, P. 156, 158, 162, 164
 Brown, R. 282
 Buchanan, G. 44–45, 52
 Burger, C. 140
 Burridge, R. 8–9, 72

 Carr, D. 9
 Carroll, J. and J. Green 269
 Carson, D. A. 19
 Carter, W. 33, 156, 185, 272, 273
 Chandler, D. 39

 Childs, B. 12, 192
 Chilton, B. 196, 197, 234
 with P. R. Davies 14–18, 76, 77, 88, 105, 111–12, 249
 Cohn, L. 104
 Conte, G. 58
 Cope, O. L. 18
 Crenshaw, J. 9, 23, 77
 Cross, F. 88
 Culler, J. 53–54
 Cullman, O. 156

 Dahl, N. 186, 238, 241, 258, 280
 Daly, R. 14, 15, 17, 124, 156
 Davies, P. R. 14
 with B. Chilton 14–18, 76, 77, 88, 105, 111–12, 249
 Davies, W. D. 283
 with D. Allison 3–6, 12–14, 134, 139, 143–44, 149, 150, 156, 159–66, 170, 172, 176, 183, 184, 186, 187, 189, 198, 200, 204–05, 210, 211–12, 213, 215, 216, 218, 219, 220, 222, 224, 225, 228–29, 231, 232–33, 241, 243, 244–45, 246, 249, 250, 254, 255, 269, 282, 285, 287, 289–90
 Dekker, W. 154
 deSilva, D. 116, 118, 121–22
 Dibelius, M. 238
 Dijk, T. van 37, 138
 Dodd, C. H. 61
 Donahue, J. 6
 Donaldson, T. 211, 214, 217–18, 220–21, 226, 230, 231
 Dormeyer, D. 141
 Draisma, S. 43, 52
 Driver, S. and A. Neubauer 191
 Duhm, B. 189
 Duling, D. 140
 Dunn, J. 280

 Eagleton, T. 50–51
 Eco, U. 9, 14, 21–41, 51, 54–58, 63, 71, 138, 265
 Ehrman, B. 126, 216
 Ekblad, C. 194
 Ellis, J. 28
 Evans, C. 62

- Feldman, L. 105, 123, 124, 125
 Fishbane, M. 45
 Fisk, B. 15, 16, 76, 104, 105, 107, 108, 110, 113
 Fitzmyer, J. 89, 90, 110
 Fletcher-Louis, C. 283, 284
 France, R. 156
 Friend, W. H. C. 116
 Freudenthal, J. 116
 Fuller, R. 156

 García Martínez, F. 89
 Geiger, A. 14–15
 Genette, G. 132
 Gerhardsson, B. 130, 175, 198, 239, 270–72, 280–81
 Gibbs, J. 140
 Gnilka, J. 156, 157, 282
 Goldin, J. 1
 Good, D. 203–04, 255
 Goodenough, E. 97–98
 Goppelt, L. 244
 Greene, T. 61
 Gundry, R. 8, 19, 156, 213, 221, 281, 282, 285, 288
 Gurtner, D. 277
 Gutschmid, A. von 93

 Hagner, D. 185
 Hahn, F. 156
 Haiman, J. 24
 Ham, C. 205
 Harrington, D. 105, 140, 156, 250
 Harris, W. 9
 Hatina, T. 47, 52
 Hauerwas, S. 141–42
 Hays, R. 4, 43–44, 52, 58–67, 133, 252–53
 Hayward, C. T. R. 248–49
 Head, P. 134
 Heil, J. P. 277
 Hengel, M. 191
 Henten, J. W. van 116, 118
 Hezser, C. 9
 Hill, D. 189, 204
 Hollander, J. 44, 45, 58–59
 Hooker, M. 189, 206, 278, 281
 Howell, D. 6
 Huizenga, L. 83, 189

 Iser, W. 29

 Jacobson, H. 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 110, 111
 Jakobson, R. 31–32

 James, M. 104
 Japhet, S. 82–83
 Jeremias, J. 156, 158–59, 169, 189, 191, 241, 243, 246, 247, 248
 Jonge, M. de 155
 Jowett, B. 65
 Juel, D. 61–62, 189, 199

 Kalimi, I. 79, 83
 Kammler, H.-C. 172, 174, 177, 179, 181
 Kee, H. C. 155, 218
 Kelly, C. 140
 Kenny, A. 225
 Kessler, E. 67–68, 81
 Kingsbury, J. D. 73–74, 135–38, 139, 140, 170, 202
 Klawans, J. 270, 274–76, 278, 280
 Knowles, M. 167
 Kristeva, J. 38, 44, 45
 Kruif, Th. de 221
 Kugel, J. 94
 Kundert, L. 80–82, 94

 Le Déaut, R. 248, 249
 Leitch, V. 49
 Lentzen-Deis, F. 168
 Levenson, J. 83, 112–13, 143, 181, 185, 186, 229
 Levering, M. 68
 Lévi-Strauss, C. 31, 46
 Levin, Y. 140
 Levine, B. 274
 Liefeld, W. 212, 215, 221, 232, 233, 234
 Lindars, B. 61, 244
 Lohse, E. 221
 Luz, U. 7–8, 10, 15, 130–31, 132, 135, 138, 140, 141, 142, 156, 163–64, 170, 173–74, 178, 198, 200, 204, 210, 218, 220, 224, 228, 234, 240, 241–42, 245, 268, 269–70, 284

 Mai, H.-P. 43, 46, 51, 53
 Matera, F. 239, 241, 270
 Mayordomo-Marín, M. 139, 183
 McNeile, A. 156, 286
 Meier, J. 156, 215, 259, 283
 Menken, M. 18, 201
 Milik, J. and J. VanderKam 88, 89, 91, 213
 Moberly, W. 10–12, 13, 78–79, 138, 177, 178, 179, 180, 212, 254
 Moffitt, D. 167
 Moi, T. 46
 Moo, D. 244, 286

- Moore, C. 93, 94
 Moses, A. D. A. 210, 211, 217, 219,
 221–22, 224, 225, 230, 233
 Moyise, S. 43, 44, 45
 Murphy, F. 104, 105, 106

 Najman, H. 85
 Neiryneck, F. 136–38
 Neusner, J. 290–91
 Neyrey, J. 203
 Nöldeke, T. 93
 Novakovic, L. 141–42, 164, 183, 200

 O’Keefe, J. and R. Reno 183
 Orr, M. 19
 Orton, D. 253
 Ostmeyer, K.-H. 141

 Paffenroth, K. 140
 Page, S. 190
 Paul, S. 85
 Pedersen, S. 234
 Peirce, C. S. 27, 32, 40
 Pellegrini, S. 18, 55, 58
 Pennington, J. 283
 Perri, C. 58
 Perrin, N. 7
 Pesch, R. 142, 149
 Philonenko, M. 155
 Popper, K. 29
 Powell, M. A. 3, 32, 72, 270, 272–73
 Przybylski, B. 172
 Pucci, J. 19, 58

 Rad, G. von 83
 Reinmuth, E. 104
 Repschinski, B. 269
 Rese, M. 52
 Rhoads, D. 6, 72
 Richardson, A. 156
 Rimoth-Kenan, S. 29
 Robertson Smith, W. 93
 Rosenberg, R. 143–44, 164
 Rothfuchs, W. 18
 Rowland, C. 156
 Ruiten, J. van 84

 Sanders, E. P. 278, 280, 290
 Sanders, J. A. 62
 Sapp, D. 194
 Scattolon, A. 154
 Schlatter, A. 286
 Schrenk, G. 168
 Schürer, E. 104, 105
 Schweizer, E. 214, 216
 Segal, A. 15, 122
 Senior, D. 18, 19, 174, 237–38,
 239–40
 Sider Hamilton, C. 277
 Smith, D. 140
 Soares Prabhu, G. 18, 170
 Spiegel, S. 1
 Stanton, G. 6–7, 18–19, 72, 130, 135,
 140, 143, 280, 285, 288
 Stark, R. 74
 Stegner, W. 108–09, 134
 Steins, G. 23
 Stendahl, K. 18
 Stone, L. 6
 Strecker, G. 18
 Streete, G. 6
 Streeter, B. H. 138

 Thrall, M. 215, 234, 255
 Tuckett, C. 18
 Turner, C. 154

 VanderKam, J. 83, 89, 90, 91
 with J. Milik 88, 89, 91, 213
 Vermes, G. 15, 16, 17, 75, 76, 83,
 88–90, 92, 124, 125, 156, 248
 Vielhauer, P. 156

 Wenham, G. 77–78
 Weren, W. 52
 Williams, S. 116, 120, 121, 122
 Williamson, H. 79, 82
 Wright, N. T. 273, 290
 Wucherpfennig, A. 147

 Yeago, D. 133

 Zimmerli, W. 83, 156

